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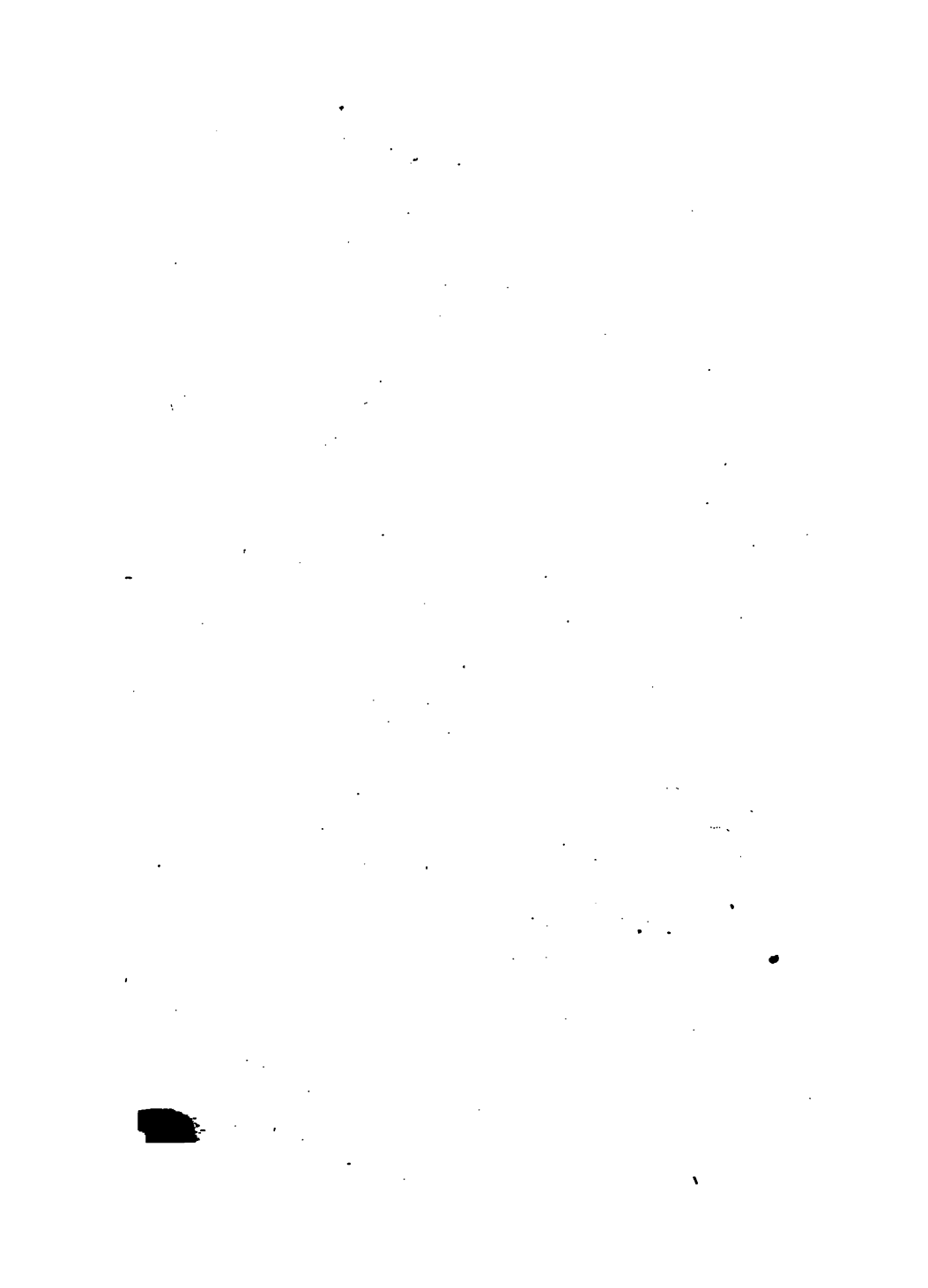
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MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME.





Make up for Lost Time.

A

COURSE OF SERMONS,

BY

GEORGE EDWARD JELF, M.A.

VICAR OF BLACKMOOR, HANTS ;

AND SOMETIME STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

‘I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.’

—IN MEMORIAM.



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TO

THE REVERED MEMORY OF MY FATHER,

These Sermons,

WHICH WERE SUBMITTED TO HIS SOUND AND SOBER
JUDGMENT,

AND WHICH HE THOUGHT WOULD PROVE,
AS THEY WERE HUMBLY DESIGNED TO BE,
OF SOME HELP TO

A TROUBLED SOUL;

ARE LOVINGLY DEDICATED,
IN DEVOUT THANKFULNESS FOR THE COMFORT OF HIS
GUIDANCE,
THE BLESSING OF HIS EXAMPLE,
AND THE JOY OF HIS COMPANIONSHIP.

SEPT. XIX. A.D. MDCCCLXXI.



‘GOD, WHO HATH PROMISED INDUL-
GENCE TO THY REPENTANCE, HATH
NOT PROMISED A TO-MORROW TO THY
DELAY.’

S. Aug. on Ps. cxliv.



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SERMON I.

THE VALUE OF A MOMENT.

ST. LUKE, iv. 5.

'A moment of time.'

TAKE the balance of Holy Writ, and weigh these words. Yea! measure them by your own life—its past experience of sin and pleasure and distress, its present opportunities for good, its hopes and fears for the unknown future, its sense of the value of this passing instant, which only you can call your own.

Men 'spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.'¹ 'In a moment shall' the *princes* 'die';² and the people,' too, 'shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away; and the *mighty* shall be taken away without hand.'³ How are the *foolish* 'brought into desolation, as in a moment,' vanishing out of the city, 'as a dream when one awaketh!'⁴ We dwell carelessly, saying

¹ Job, xxi. 13.

² Job, xxxiv. 20.

³ Ib.

⁴ Psalm lxxiii. 19, 20.

in the pride of our heart, 'I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children;' but the Word of God goeth forth, and 'these two things come' upon us 'in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood.'¹ I go on securely, thinking that all is well; but immediately thou hearest, 'O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war!' and 'suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.'² I am brought face to face with a great peril, and on the moment of my choice depends everything. I fast, and at the end of my fasting comes a moment for the resolution of a life-time. We communicate, and as we leave the Sanctuary, the very first moment, God's grace, Christ's Presence within us, has to meet the old temptations without us. Yet a little further, we yield; we thought we were standing, but lo! we are brought to an instant fall. Then we forfeit grace, we forsake the Presence, we harden our hearts from God's fear, we stay ourselves on our own wilful perverseness; and 'this iniquity' is to us 'as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.'³ Or a quick pang at the heart summons before us the vision of sudden death, and the question of questions is upon us, 'Am I ready to meet God?' and life at

¹ Isaiah, xlvii. 8, 9.

² Jer. iv. 19, 20.

³ Isaiah, xxx. 13.

last attains its true proportions in our eyes, as the preparation for eternity. Or while we are in health and strength, and all things seem to continue as they were, and we sleep and rise night and day, amid the buying and selling, the joys and cares of the world—the Voice of the Lord bears in upon us that solemn message of the end, ‘We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.’¹

To the soul thus awfully aroused, and snatched as a brand out of the burning, the thought of all others most pressing is generally this: ‘How can I make up for lost time, and redeem it, as I am told to redeem it, for God?’ Conscience saith to such an one, that he has wasted all his time and all his labour; for (in the words of old Chaucer) ‘sin bereaveth a man both of goodness of nature, and of goodness of grace,’ since the good works done apart from Christ are not *so* good as to merit Heaven; and ‘the grace of the Holy Ghost fareth like fire that may not be idle;’ when we work not thereby, it faileth, and we lose the glory of which its brightness is the promise and pledge. ‘Well may he be sorry, then, that oweth *all his life* to God—as long as he hath lived, and as long as he shall live—to think that he hath *no* goodness wherewith to pay his debt to God. Well may he feel, with S. Bernard, that he must give account

¹ 1 Corinthians, xv. 51, 52.

of all the goods that have been given him in this present life; so much so, that there shall not perish an hair of his head, nor a moment of an hour perish of his time, that he shall not render thereof a reckoning.’¹

O sorrowful remembrance of the good that we have left undone upon earth; of the holiness of our childhood, from which we turned, and which cannot deliver us in this ‘day of’ our ‘transgression;’² of the evil deeds, words, thoughts, which mark the days and months and years that are gone for ever; of the *habits* of sin, which we have woven for ourselves out of the warp of our original wickedness and the woof of our continuous ill-doing, till they are as the cloke that we have upon us, and as the girdle that we are alway girded withal. Are they not bitter recollections that crowd upon us in the dread of the end which cometh on so fast, and in the sense of the unspeakable worth of the rapidly lessening portion allotted to us? ‘I remember,’ (says the spirit of man within him, gathering up, like one drowning, a life-scene as in a moment,) ‘I remember the time past.’³ Through the dark valleys of secret sin, and the rivers of iniquity, and over the mountains of pride, and the rocky places of rebellious disobedience, and the wilderness of dreary aimless wandering, ‘where there lay no

¹ ‘Canterbury Tales.’—(The Parson’s Tale.)

² Ezekiel, xxxiii. 12.

³ Psalm cxliii. 5.

way,' I can trace my path. Yesterday's stubborn disregard of God, and passionate self-will towards man—last week's abiding selfishness—last month's neglect of anything like real prayer—my refusal, through these many months, to stir up the gift of God which was imparted to me by the laying on of hands—my refusal to humble myself for the Holy Communion—my refusal, silent yet thorough, to search the Scriptures at precious times never to be recalled;—I can think of it all. *Yet* do I remember the time past: the many days of idleness, of eye-service, of dishonesty in work, of craftiness in business; the days, lengthened into years, of cold indifference to the ordinances of God—of practical unbelief towards Jesus Christ—of utter disregard of the promptings and guidance of His Spirit—of living, in spite of Sunday professions, 'without God in the world.'¹ And *yet* do I remember the time past: the beginning of evil—the first 'motions of sin'—the unchecked appetite—the unbridled temper—the unconfessed deceit—the love of man's praise rather than God's—the determination to carry out, at whatever cost, my own will—the dallying with temptation—the loss of an hour, granted for a lesson, and thrown away on mere trifling; these, and such as these, we recall with painful regret—the sins and offences of our youth. Yes, and the *whole* retrospect, what is

¹ Ephesians, ii. 12.

it, as we look back, but a series of falls and failures—time utterly wasted, and then avenging itself on its destroyers; time coming forward as our friend, but leaving us as our enemy; time offering us acceptance with God, but since we neglected so great salvation, only adding to the burden of our account!

Is there then no remedy? no help against despair? no means *now* left of redeeming the time? no way whereby to 'gather up the fragments that remain,'¹ and to offer them as a sacrifice to God? It depends entirely on one thing, whether we are truly earnest in our repentance, thoroughly sincere in our self-humiliation. There is no welcome with our Father till we come to Him; we cannot come to Him unless we first come to ourselves, trembling at our distance from Home, and knowing that 'the time is short.'² Yet when we do thus commune with our own heart—when we are thus alarmed about the final issue—when we do thus arise and go towards Him Whom we have lost awhile, and may the next moment lose for ever—consolation begins to take shape and substance for us; and though the voices are anxious, there is no longer the silence of the grave.

I. First, the sudden fear which rushes upon our heart in the thought of an instant end, and of this fleeting invaluable life all but run out, bears a

¹ S. John, vi. 12.

² 1 Cor. vii. 29.

mercy for us within itself. The electric spark can strike us not merely in the awful form of the deadly lightning-flash, but also in the marvellous power of the quickener, thrilling the paralyzed into activity. And 'the terror of the Lord,'¹ startling as it is in itself, is also, even before it becomes persuasive, mighty to revive our slumbering spirits, and to give present practical direction to what might otherwise be the vague purposeless desire for better things. For it is clear, that whatever we have to do under the pressure of a great necessity, must be done without looking to the right hand or to the left. The brief space granted must be spent 'in instant and earnest execution of whatever it may be possible for us to accomplish in the time.'² And may we not reverently suppose that this is the very aim of God, Who so fervently longeth for our salvation, that He would blot out all that is past, if so be that in the faith of His Son we would strive to make our last our best service, concentrating on the remnant of daylight all the vigour which is left to us still?

II. And then, as to the intolerable weight of that Past: whatever may be our own failure to attain as yet the full relief, however deep the darkness through our own prolonged hatred of the light, the promise of God at least standeth sure, 'The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us

¹ 2 Cor. v. 11.

² Ruskin's Lectures on Art, p. 80.

from *all sin*.'¹ Many days and years, it may be, we shall be troubled, ere the day-star of perfect peace dawn in our hearts; but at all events for *others*, in 'the comfort of the Scriptures' there is 'hope';² and sooner or later, as we set our minds to do God's Will, we 'shall know of the doctrine'³ for ourselves, and find with unutterable thankfulness *our* place of pardon, under that Cross which overshadows all the world, and which covers all its sin. Gradually, the question which we asked ourselves in agony, is answered for us by the wonderful Passion of our Lord. 'Is the Lord's Hand shortened that it cannot save?'⁴ Nay, He saith to me, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.'⁵ Those outstretched Arms embrace us every *one*. For He, Who died for us, is 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance:'⁶ to *repentance*, mark you; but that is but the first stage of the homeward journey, reached by that very sorrow which is making you suffer for sin.

III. Then further, as we 'may die *any* day, so every fresh day is a gain' to our soul. It is a new mercy of God that we are alive each one of us *to-day*. Whatever may have been our past, *this*

¹ 1 S. John, i. 7.

² Romans, xv. 4.

³ S. John, vii. 17.

⁴ Isaiah, lix. 1; l. 2. ⁵ S. John, xii. 32.

⁶ 2 S. Peter, iii. 9.

day at all events is no part of it; *this* stands by itself as 'the accepted time, *the* day of salvation;'¹ *use* it, and it may be 'profitable' for 'the life that now is, and' for 'that which is to come;'² use it for your soul, and your soul shall have cause therein for endless rejoicing; use it for God—in the search after God, the work for God, the obedience to God, the patient waiting upon God—and lo! He will be with you more than He has ever been, and you shall remember this day as 'the day in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,' 'the beginning of months,' the opening of those glorious years which belong not to time but to eternity.

IV. And again, as every day is a step towards death, so 'it may be a step towards the Kingdom of Heaven.'³ The very moments fly at the Will of God; and though they beat out the little lives of men, they bring, each of them, opportunities from Him. One temptation wrestled with, one sinful pleasure foregone, one act of self-denial practised, one deed of love done in Christ's Name, one prayer uttered from the heart—may mark the day as on the forward, not the backward course—nearer home, not further from it. God may be 'yet a great way off;' but He sees us, not as man seeth, however

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

² 1 S. Tim. iv. 8.

³ Bishop Armstrong, in 'The Pastor in his Closet,' a little book *most useful to the parochial clergy*.

far removed, if only our face is towards Him, and our will inclined unto His. So, 'faint yet pursuing,' we go after Jesus. The moment is priceless for escape; it may be too late to-morrow; the clouds lift for a very short interval, and through the darkness we behold Him—not nigh as yet, but nearer than before, exceeding beautiful to our contrite hearts, and to our souls which believe most precious.

Then, in that comfortable vision, though it passeth speedily, we learn the value of a point of time, and pray Him to enable us in our *short* time to fulfil a *long* time; that time may become our servant instead of our master, working for us through 'our light affliction' an 'eternal weight of glory,'¹—through our cross our crown, through our patience His Kingdom, through the little while of our labour the everlasting inheritance of His Rest. Then, little by little, the pleasures of this present time grow pale, and the minutes of prayer are full of brightness, and 'the Life of Jesus' is 'made manifest in our mortal flesh,'² and *our* 'life is hid with Christ in God.'³ Then, as His forgiveness heals us, and His mercy consoles us, and His grace quickens us—we do not presume indeed, for the Christian is never presumptuous; we do not think ourselves 'already perfect'—knowing from sad experience our

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

² 2 Cor. iv. 11.

³ Col. iii. 3.

many imperfections—‘but this one thing’ we ‘do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,’ we ‘press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’¹

¹ Philippians, iii. 12-14.

SERMON II.

THE ETERNAL ISSUE.

ISAIAH, xxxiii. 14.

' Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?'

IF a moment of time is precious, what shall we think of eternity? If the remembrance of having wasted the least portion of the short life lent to us, is enough to stir us up to the diligent use of that which yet remaineth, how can we look on to that Kingdom which shall have no end, that outer darkness never to be removed, without fleeing at once from that wrath to come, and seeking without delay that glorious crown, in the way of bitter, sincere, godly sorrow for the past, and of earnest, instant, Christian diligence in the few hours ere nightfall?

Of a truth, my friends, we do not value time, till we have learnt the meaning of the everlasting. In the awful light of *that* revelation, with its tremendous issues depending on our conduct here, we see the exceeding great peril of losing our *present opportunities*, squandering our talents on

the earth, spending our 'money for that which is not bread, and' our 'labour for that which satisfieth not,'¹ living and working for our own selfish ends, rather than for the glory of God. It is no new thing to say that this man is covetous, and that man a drunkard; that *you* are envious, and *you* are slothful; that *you* have given yourself over to uncleanness, and *you* to love of eating; that *your* besetting sin has been vanity, and *yours* variance and anger; that *you* have acquired a habit of lying, and *you* a temper of pride; that lasciviousness has been *your* bane, and discontentment *yours*; that *you* have been conquered by hypocrisy, and *you* by uncharitableness. These are not strange accusations, which conscience brought against you last night, or repeats to-day. But have you counted the cost? have you borne in mind the stern unwavering words in which Holy Scripture condemns all this, declaring, with no uncertain sound, that 'they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God?'² Are you recollecting now, in this Presence of Christ, His own emphatic warning about 'everlasting punishment'?³ I am sure you do not, many of you; for if you did, you would amend your lives. I am sure you do not; for if you did, you would weep for your sins, and be in bitterness for the sufferings of Jesus, Who was crucified to deliver

¹ Isaiah, lv, 2.

² 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 21.

³ S. Matt. xxv. 46.

us from destruction; if you did, the one abiding passionate desire of your heart would be to live henceforth not unto yourself, but unto Him Which died for you,¹ to devote all your powers of soul and body to His blessed service, if by any means you might attain to the resurrection of the dead, and 'escape the damnation of hell.'² This is not yet the purpose of many here; and therefore, that it *may* be the purpose of every one amongst you, we must speak of the terror of the Lord, which, like His *Love*, enables us to 'persuade men.'³ Must we not tremble at His Word? *Who* hath brought into the Church this solemn and awful teaching? Is it an enemy that hath done this? Nay, verily, but our greatest Friend, Who gave Himself for us:

'Christ on Himself, considerate Master, took
The utterance of that doctrine's fearful sound.
The Fount of Love His servants sends to tell
Love's deeds; Himself reveals the sinner's Hell.'⁴

Remember, I pray you, how Jesus speaks of this. Not once, nor twice, but at sundry times and in divers manners, He declares to us this most alarming most constraining truth. Is the fear of men to be driven out of our minds? He forewarns us '*Whom*' we are to 'fear: fear Him Which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him.'⁵ Are the lusts in our members seducing

¹ 2 Cor. v. 15.

² S. Matt. xxiii. 33.

³ 2 Cor. v. 11.

⁴ *Lyra Apostolica*, lxxxlii.

⁵ S. Matt. x. 28; S. Luke, xii. 4, 5.

us from the Law of God? 'It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.'¹ Are we tempted to 'behold vanity,' to read that which inflames our desire, to walk by sight rather than by faith? 'If thine eye *offend* thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.'² Are we slow to exercise charity? He foresees the dreadful judgment wherein they who exercise it not shall depart, as accursed from Him, 'into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'³ Are we following a multitude to do evil? He tells us, that that broad way, whereon many walk, leadeth (not to a lower place in Heaven, but) to *destruction*.⁴ Are we saying to ourselves, 'I shall not be remembered among so many people: for what is *my soul* among such an infinite number of creatures?'⁵ His answer is very plain. 'The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'⁶ Are we bent on explaining away His solemn teaching? He repeats it three times,⁷ so that there may be no misunderstanding. He heaps up, as it were, one forcible

¹ S. Matt. xviii. 8. ² S. Mark, ix. 47. ³ S. Matt. xxv. 41.

⁴ *Ib.* vii. 13. ⁵ Eccclus. xvi. 17. ⁶ S. Matt. xiii. 49, 50.

⁷ S. Mark, ix. 44, 46, 48; cf. S. Luke, xii. 5.

expression on another, as if to reply to man's doubting, cavilling, questioning spirit. What is hell? it is the fire that never shall be quenched. Is this outward misery only? No, inward also; for 'their worm dieth not.'

Brethren, we are *sometimes* afraid, *sometimes* ashamed, *sometimes* oppressed by the devil, *sometimes* weighed down by a guilty conscience, *sometimes* uneasy, *sometimes* forecasting evil to come, *sometimes* without consolation, *sometimes* tried by the defiling companionship of the wicked, *sometimes* out of heart, *sometimes* void of peace, *sometimes* cut off for a while from God. Have you ever thought with yourself, what it would be to be *always* thus, *always* in fear, *always* in shame, in *everlasting* contempt, *always* with devils, *always* conscience-stricken, *never* at ease, *always* expecting evil, *never* comforted, at *all* times with the enemies of the Lord, *always* miserable, having *no* peace, *for ever* without God? The mind sinks down in utter wretchedness at the bare notion of such a hopeless state. But surely our present ignorance as to the other world, is the true explanation of this natural grief and difficulty. 'We, of ourselves, with no experience but of time, know of course nothing of eternity, its being or its conditions, except what Almighty God reveals to us.' And as 'all knowledge as to Eternity must come from the Eternal, Whose it is,'¹ so, depend upon it, 'the Father of mercies,'

¹ Dr. Pusey's Sermon on Everlasting Punishment. 1864.

the Lord of love, 'the God of all comfort,' would never have disclosed to us this picture of Eternity in woe, except to keep us back from it. God shews us Himself as the Judge, in order that we may 'escape the Judgment of God.' God warns us of 'the *wrath* of the Lamb,'¹ for fear we should forget, in His heavenly gentleness, the fierceness of His anger. God takes us by the hand, and points out to us 'the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and all liars,' having 'their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,'² only that *we* may give up our faithless fears, our cold unbelief, our sins which He hates, our murderous malice and revenge, our uncleanness, our many deceits and guiles, our worship of self, our constant falsehoods, 'and may enter in through the gates into the City.'³ God describes to us the hiding away of His Face, so that we may seek His Face now while it is yet turned towards us. God gives us a touch of the anguish of feeling time for ever lost, just that we may redeem it in this day of our salvation, and store it in the eternal treasure-house with our penitent hearts. As, with S. John, we seem to hear at this instant the angel's startling tidings that there shall be 'time no longer,'⁴ we begin to

¹ Rev. vi. 16.² *Ib.* xxi. 8.³ *Ib.* xxii. 14.⁴ *Ib.* x. 6.

think on our ways of negligence and wastefulness. As we see 'on the low dark verge of life, the twilight of eternal day,' we ask ourselves how we have used our lamps, and whether they are indeed still burning. As the books, about to be opened, appear to us, and we know that the account may close this night, our heartfelt prayer is, 'Teach us to number our days,' and our resolution follows, '*This day, O Lord, shall be Thine.*' Now, if never before, 'it is high time to awake out of sleep.'¹ *Forward* I look, and the prospect, unless I repent, is appalling; *backward* I look, and the sight of life as spent by me, is appalling also, and humiliating in its call for repentance; but the dread of losing God humbles and then exalts me. *Backward* I look, and behold! my sufferings which have not made me perfect; but *forwards* I look, and behold! the blessedness of those who have been '*exercised*'² by their sorrows. And then the 'eternal weight of glory'³ helps me to use these trials, which have been useless to me hitherto; and the time, though short, is precious.

'A moment lasts all joy below,
Whereby man sinks to endless woe;
A moment lasts all earthly pain,
Whereby an endless joy we gain.
Ponder, O man, Eternity!'⁴

¹ Rom. xiii. 11.

² Heb. xii. 11.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

⁴ Wülffer, in *Lyra Germanica*.

Yes, endless joy, eternal rest, everlasting life! set against these the heaviness which endureth for a night, the work of a little day, the mortifying, during this brief space, of our members which are upon the earth. With us, if we judge aright, all this is 'but a very small thing.' With us the thought should be, how poor have been our sufferings thus far! how incomplete our labours! how far short of resisting unto blood our strife against sin!¹ With us the purpose should be now, to bear more patiently, to toil more earnestly, to crucify more resolutely our 'flesh with the affections and lusts.'² Never to be tempted! then we must endeavour not to yield to temptation now. Never to be tried! then let us not lose our trial-time. Never to have crying again, nor any pain!³ Then let us sorrow now for our sins, and have the healing distress now of a contrite heart. Never to lose His communicated Life! Then how can I any longer delay to eat that Flesh and drink that Blood, which 'whoso eateth and drinketh *hath* eternal life' begun already?⁴ Never to be parted from my God! Then why should I not walk with Him now on the path of holy obedience, which is the only way to the peace of His Presence? Never to be condemned by Him! then surely I must prevent the last great day, and judge myself.⁵

¹ Heb. xii. 4.² Gal. v. 24.³ Rev. xxi. 4.⁴ *S. John*, vi. 54.⁵ *1 Cor.* xi. 31.

Never more to need Christ's prayer! Oh, then, how highly should I prize in this world, that access to the Father, which is granted me through *Him*! To believe God more; to fear and love Him more, to serve Him more faithfully, to worship Him with greater reverence and gratitude, to search more constantly His Scriptures, to seek more diligently His abundant grace—this will henceforth be our aim, if we really look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Whatever may have been our past, however deeply we have plunged in sin, how far soever we may have wandered from our Good Shepherd, the remembrance of Him 'Who is ready to judge the quick and the dead,'¹ is enough to make us 'no longer live the rest of' our 'time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the Will of God;'² and, thanks be to Him, His ever-blessed Son 'is the propitiation for' *all* those sins;³ yea, He can make up for us out of the treasury of His Passion, the years which the locust hath eaten, the countless days and hours of a wasted life-time. They pass and are reckoned against us; yet as, in the solemn recollection of the heart-searching account, and of its following judgment, we bitterly and heartily repent, the shadow is indeed brought back upon the sun-dial, and the Light of God streams down on fresh

¹ 1 S. Peter, iv. 5.

² *Ib.* 2.

³ 1 S. John, ii. 2.

opportunities, and we set to work vigorously and humbly, under the Cross of Christ, trusting yet to receive, though most unworthy of it, our beautiful crown from Him, to Whom '*one* day' of heart-felt faith and love 'is as a thousand years.'¹

¹ 2 S. Peter, iii. 8.

SERMON III.

THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

ROMANS, ii. 4.

‘The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.’

THE glory of eternity is the profit of time ; and strange as it may seem to us in our ignorance, that the value of a moment should be gauged by everlasting issues, the longer we dwell upon the thought, the less it becomes to us matter for marvel, and the more a call to awake out of sleep for a life of thanksgiving and of earnestness. We cannot know ‘the Mind of the Lord,’ and it is enough for us to be assured, that our smallest things, the minutes and instants of man, are bound up with *His* purposes, Who ‘comprehendeth the dust of the earth in a measure,’¹ and gives for it the imperishable gold of Heaven : Who fashions, out of life’s little day, a work and a wonder which shall stand in the ‘Kingdom that cannot be moved :’² Who alone sees ‘the end from the beginning,’³ and declares it to us, that we may be willing workers together with

¹ Isaiah, xl. 12. ² Hebrews, xii. 28. ³ Isaiah, xli. 10.

Him in bringing about the final consummation by present diligence in our state of trial.

But, though we cannot attain to the counsels of God, or understand how from 'a vapour that vanisheth'¹ can be kindled the glorious or the terrible fire of the eternal world, there is a practical lesson which we *can* learn, and which we *ought* to read as we run in daily experience. For the succession of precious moments, the continuance of 'exceeding precious promises'—a succession and a continuance whereof we are ourselves the witnesses—*may* remind us, as it was doubtless intended they should, of God's unspeakable goodness towards us. What thinkest thou, O man, about this past life of thine? As oftentimes, a mother's love, welcoming us home again in spite of the shameful sins which she hated in us, stirs up in our souls a deep feeling of grateful affection for her, even before she has brought us to our knees in the pain and confusion of repentance; so, it may be, the 'long-patience' of our Heavenly Father, in waiting for us all these years, impressed upon us at last by some special mercy or warning, will persuade us, more even than 'the dread of judgment,' to turn to Him *because* He has been thus good and gracious, that we may dedicate to Him, with all our strength, the residue of a misspent youth, or of a wasted manhood. Nay! shall we not, in considering His ways of love, be more sincere

¹ S. James, iv. 14.

and humble in considering our ways of sin? Truly, the one study will re-act upon the other; the sense of God's long-suffering will intensify our sorrow for having been so fearfully rebellious, and make it the real grief of those who know themselves: and the thorough search into ourselves will deepen our devout regard for Him, Who has been unwilling that even *we* should perish.

Let us help one another in this retrospect of Divinely-prolonged life, and remind each other of 'the end of the Lord,' so that we may be no more blind to His Providence, or deaf to His Voice, or dead amid that new creation which He is quickening ceaselessly for Himself.

I. And first, what a wonderful record of God's Love we should read in that history of ours, if all things whatsoever He hath wrought for us and in us could be brought to our remembrance by His Spirit! Even that portion of it which we can gather up for ourselves teems with blessings. Think how He has spared us amid the negligences of yesterday, the poverty-stricken covetousness of mature years, the wilful indolence and sensuality of boyhood, the passion and disobedience of 'childish things,' the manifold perils of our infancy. See how His mercy is traceable through all the intricate lines of our bodily and mental growth, in all His varied dealings with us—preservation, chastisement, examples, teachings, dangers, disappointments, dif-

ficulties, checks, sicknesses, sudden visitations, unexpected changes, bitter sorrows, special prosperity, chances as we deem them, really ordered or allowed by Him. Go through those pathetic Confessions of S. Augustine, and mark how he finds in everything that had befallen him, occasions of praise to God. His wanderings, accursed as he owned them to be, could yet, when repented of, magnify that later guidance. His very death in error proved to him, as he revived therefrom, the restoring power of the Life. The chains of his bondage, as he shakes them from him, seem to ring out in our ears the notes of thanksgiving to Him, Who had let the imprisoned go free. As a boy, he had learnt the use of speech, of memory, of truth, of friendship; and these were the gifts of God. As a young man, sinful though he was, and most polluted, he had been kept from *some* sins, and this too was the gift of God. In maturity, with his soul still unbelieving, he had almost died, in the body, of a fever: and health to his miserable body, faith for his far more miserable soul, had been, in answer to Monica's prayers, the gift of God.¹

And such as this, my friends, though so few of us have as yet searched it out, is the real interest and secret thread which runs through our own past course. We are alive this day: what have we not escaped? When we begin to reckon even our most

¹ Confessions, v. 16.

signal deliverances, we may well be amazed. It is scarcely too much to say of anyone, that there has been, not once nor twice, only a step between him and death. It is certain, that again and again, when others were falling beside us, we ourselves have been upheld. And how shall we speak of *spiritual* peril? We shudder at the enormity of other men's sins, and cannot conceive how human nature could reach such a depth of depravity. But it is only the grace of God which has kept *us* back from utter corruption. It is only His blessed influence which has prevented the seed of evil, already manifested in our words and works, from yielding the deadly fruit of utter ungodliness. Till the last day, indeed, we shall never fully know the measure of His tender mercy towards us, nor understand what great things He hath done for us, in providing, exactly at the right moment, this help or that hindrance, drawing us to that path rather than to this, meeting us in seemingly-crooked ways, and not, where we afterwards found Him, in His own plain road whereby He bringeth men to life, suffering us to have misgivings and fears, that so we might cling to Him with greater assurance and trustfulness, calling to us out of the 'clouds and darkness' which 'are round about Him,' ministering to us in divers manners and at seasons least expected, impelling us by all means towards home. All this we shall know hereafter. But meanwhile, even *one* instance of

His love for us should be enough to raise us to heartfelt adoration. Take the one sin, which, without any self-examination, you feel to be that which weighs most heavily upon your conscience, and which still you keep on committing almost day by day. Yet God waits and waits, and does not carry out the sentence which you pass upon yourself. And why? Surely, 'that He may be gracious unto you.'¹

II. And this is just what the Holy Ghost tells us by the Apostle—even that same 'Spirit of Christ, Which was in'² the Prophet of old: 'The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.' It is, you see, a most *personal* appeal, as well as an all-embracing invitation from Him Who 'will have all men to be saved.'³ It is you yourself, who are exhorted to come: not merely *this* man, whose intemperance is open to you; nor *that* one, whom you know to be given to impurity; nor the family yonder, which seems to have no sense of honesty left; nor the person by your side, whom you feel so thoroughly unlike—a liar forsooth, or a passionate person, a lover of money, or a lover of pleasure, a vain woman or a frivolous;—not these alone, but *you*. God is leading *thee*. As through the whole course of thy life there are marks of His merciful Presence—signs secret to Him and to thyself—so thou and thy shortcomings and transgressions are as much His

¹ Isaiah, xxx. 18.

² 1 S. Peter, i. 11.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

care as if there were no other sinners in the wide world to be brought back to a better mind and a holier walk. If, as our Saviour tells us, not one of the falling birds is forgotten before God, we cannot doubt that each of us, with his separate trials and temptations, his peculiar sins and habits, is remembered in that Heart of Love, which has 'joy over one sinner that repenteth,' and is ready to go after the one lost sheep until He find it. Only recollect, Brethren, it is to real repentance that He would bring us, to true contrition of heart for our wasted polluted years, to newness of life during the brief space that remaineth, to steady faithful work in the neglected vineyard of our Father's forsaken Presence. 'Turn ye, turn ye at My reproof.' There is the *call* of love, not only the *patience* of love; the drawing as well as the sparing; the awful seriousness, together with the tender expression, in the merciful Face of the High and Holy One. Too often, most unhappily, we mistake the purpose of the long-continued delay; and His Look of compassionate regard, which should have been for our wealth, becomes to us an occasion of falling into that terrible state of the reprobate, for which 'He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn.'¹ 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.'²

¹ Psalm ii. 4.² Eccles. viii. 11.

And so life hurries on, and judgment is nearer, and there are fewer opportunities, and less space for repentance, and more years to sorrow for, 'and all our work to do with palsied hands and cold,'¹ and no excuse all the while for this fatal negligence and sloth!

III. For the Scripture, though it speaks of a man's *not knowing* the gracious intention of God, implies by the very form of the question, that the ignorance is wilful, and the blindness self-inflicted. You do not pretend, when you follow the forbidden road, that you have never *heard* God had warned you to leave it: your ears had heard it, but your heart had rejected it. You do not excuse yourself for your impenitent clinging to impurity or pride, by saying you cannot *see* what is written: you cannot, because you will not, see: your eyes are closed by your own act and deed; and the warning and promise, though they were in letters of fire, would remain unread. Surely, if there be one state more deadly than another, it is the state of those, who, feeling themselves spared, go on as if nothing had happened, and, acknowledging with their own lips that God has given them time to flee from the wrath to come, continue absolutely unchanged. Such men will not '*retain* God in their knowledge,'² nor suffer His converting grace to convert *them*, nor take one step homewards. There is a fearful word

¹ *Christian Year.* Sunday next before Advent. ² Rom. i. 28.

spoken of such in this very Epistle: 'God gave them over to a reprobate mind.'¹ May He keep it far from us! But, O my friends, which of those sins into which the heathen sank, is not to be found in Christian England, after all these centuries of light and grace? Are we free ourselves from the peril, if we forget that 'the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation'² only to those who repent and amend? Use that grace, so freely offered now, and fear to forfeit it by losing any more time. 'Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.'³

Can you despise any further the riches of that wonderful forbearance? Can we, in the far country which we have made too much our own, bear to think unmoved of the One Who has been watching for us so long in the dear old Home? Our Father is merciful still; even the creatures of His lower creation have food enough and to spare: and can He, while yet there is hope, forget His sons and daughters, baptized long ago into His Family, regarded these many years with loving pitiful care, desired with that supernatural desire, which the Spirit alone can shew us, among 'the deep things of God?'⁴ He in His unutterable affection, is kind even 'to the unthankful and the evil;'⁵ and therefore, when the fount of gratitude begins to spring up, and your first faint desire is formed to

¹ Rom. i. 28.² 2 S. Peter, iii. 15.³ S. John, xii. 35.⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 10.⁵ St. Luke, vi. 35.

‘refuse the evil and choose the good,’ to eschew past sin, and to seek Him from whom you have revolted, when, though weak and wavering as yet, you resolve on spending time for God, instead of wasting it, as you have done so persistently, on things which ‘perish with the using’—‘He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry: when He shall hear it, He will answer you.’¹

IV. Finally therefore, Brethren, be not afraid lest He should have reserved no blessing for you—no place of rest for your contrite soul in the ‘many mansions’ of the House ‘eternal in the Heavens.’ ‘Hath God forgotten to be gracious? and will He shut up His loving-kindness in displeasure?’² Surely ‘the Lord’s Hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His Ear heavy, that it cannot hear.’³ Though for a while perhaps He has withdrawn Himself because of our iniquities, yet He, Who sent His Only-begotten Son into the world to save sinners, is ready to pardon and to receive us—ready to go forth to meet us when we are ‘yet a great way off,’⁴ if only we are feeling after Him, owning His compassion and our unworthiness, and pleading in all humility His promises. Beware only of hardness and an impenitent heart, and of that cold indifference, which hears no call in the invitations of the Father, or the cry of the Crucified,

¹ Isaiah, xxx. 19. ² Psalm lxxvii. 9. ³ Isaiah, lix. 1.

⁴ S. Luke, xv. 20.

or the groanings of the Comforting Spirit. Consider daily the unspeakable goodness of the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, and then consider your ways; and in that goodness your soul will at last rise up from its torpor. For, as you examine yourself in that mirror of mercy, you will behold not only 'the goodness,' but also 'the severity of God.'¹ Behind that vision of long-suffering pity, there gathers, day by day and hour by hour, the final 'wrath of the Lamb.'² The Spirit of love will 'not always strive with'³ you—not longer, it may be, than to-day; and there will come forth instead, in all its terror, 'the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.'⁴ Oh, what would it be, to be treasuring up unto ourselves, during all this duration of His patience, the 'tribulation and anguish'⁵ of the reprobate! 'Repent, and do the first works,'⁶ at the point where the growth of faith was broken off. Would it not be worth any sacrifice to have returned to the path of life, rather than wait unchanged for that day, when the great Shout bursts upon the world,⁷ and you stand revealed before men and angels, in the presence of an Almighty Judge, unprofitable in time, and lost for eternity?

¹ Romans, xi. 22.² Rev. vi. 16.³ Genesis, vi. 3.⁴ Isaiah, iv. 4.⁵ Romans, ii. 9.⁶ Rev. ii. 5.⁷ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

SERMON IV.

REVIEW OF LIFE.

PSALM cxix. 59, 60.

'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.'

THE value of this present moment, and the eternal issues of its work, ought, when brought before us, to make us think. And when, to these fearful and glorious considerations, we add the weight of gratitude which is due from us to God, for His patient goodness and forbearance, we may well set ourselves, in all seriousness, for very love's sake, no less than for our salvation, to look back on the road traversed by our wandering feet. His mercy leads us to repentance; but repentance, though not the end of the journey, is a course, not a mere point, of sorrow; and the first step thereon is the coming to oneself, and thinking on one's own true life and state. And such meditation is different from that sudden rush of remembrance, which is experienced either in the despair of the

'last hour,' or in the startling alarm of its *apparent* approach or of the nearness of judgment. This, whereof we speak, is rather the steady survey (itself, perhaps, begun in terror) of all that is past, and of all that is passing—the review of the personal life.

Thoughtlessness is the great destroyer of men.¹ Habits of sin are not formed wilfully. We do not become at once, of set purpose, drunkards, or liars, or unclean persons, or profane. Even the acts and words which form these habits, are not generally planned beforehand, but spring up, as it were, unbidden, under some unforeseen temptation, or out of the unchecked bias of our fallen nature. Nay, more! of many sins we could scarcely bring ourselves to think beforehand, till the furnace is heated, and the passions are stirred. We do not look in the face what we are about to do, lest we should not dare to do it. Is it not dreadfully true, that 'it is the very business of sinners to forget themselves, and drown their memory?'² Even practised sinners find it hard to sin with their eyes fully open; for the remains of God's Image abide even in the worst of us, and His Blessed Spirit shews sin to be an evil to the *most* sinful, till the condition of the reprobate (which

¹ Cf. Bishop Butler's Analogy, Part I. chap. 2. Dr. Pusey's Sermons, vol. i., p. 157.

² *Ib.* p. 159.

man cannot ascertain) is reached. And so, 'while man yet feels sin to *be* an evil, he shrinks from thinking of it, or that he will do it, or has done it: until he is quite blinded, and counts darkness for light, and light for darkness. . . . At first, sinners do not think; then, they will not think; at last, they cannot think.'

But then, does not this last state of such men prove to us, that thoughtlessness, though it *be* thoughtlessness, is deadly after all? Dives is 'in torments,' when he has to 'remember'¹—to think, that is, too late, about that which he thought not of in his 'life-time.' And how great is the peril, is borne in upon us by the teaching of our Lord, when He warns us, not merely against 'surfeiting and drunkenness,' against a covetous spirit and a lustful eye, but also against that careless, thoughtless, soulless activity, foreshadowed 'in the days of Lot,' when 'they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded,' and knew not till 'it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them all;'² for the things of time and sense, which we *must* do every day, and which we *might* do for God, were done by the men of Sodom, and are often done by us, in forgetfulness of God and of eternity. And though we kindle up at this comparison of ourselves to the polluted inmates of such a city, it is well for us to recollect, that the

¹ S. Luke, xvi. 25.

² S. Luke, xvii. 28.

beginning of fornication is the departure from God, and its reward 'the vengeance of eternal fire.'¹ Was it not of His chosen Israel that the Lord spake by His prophet, 'My people doth not *consider*?'² Was it not over *them* that He pronounced such woe, on *them* that He brought such a captivity, because, while 'the harp and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine,' were 'in their feasts,' they regarded 'not the work of the Lord, neither' considered 'the operation of His Hands'?³

And so, my friends, to keep us from something infinitely worse, even the 'everlasting chains under darkness,'⁴ to save us from being 'punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord,'⁵ He breaks in upon our dream, turning us, in His mercy, back into ourselves, that so we may turn back to Him. This very verse has been His loving call to thousands upon thousands; the voice by which a converted sinner strengthens his brethren; the confession, inspired of God, whereby His converting grace would win us to holiness and life, even to Himself. 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.' What have been our paths? whither are they tending? what manner of men have we made ourselves?

On the very threshold of such a solemn inquiry there seems, as we first look upon it, a great and

¹ S. Jude, 7.

² Isaiah, i. 3.

³ Isaiah, v. 12.

⁴ S. Jude, 6.

⁵ 2 Thess. i. 9.

real difficulty. How vast is the surface of life which we have to traverse! How wide are the fields and plains of memory!¹ How countless are its dens and caves! How profound and awful is its darksome deep! Yet God has been with us in all that we have done; and our prayer should be that of the penitent, bewildered by the extent of his multitude of sins, yet feeling on that very account the more intensely the multitude of God's loving-kindnesses, and seeking to know himself as he is known of Him: 'Suffer me, I beseech Thee, to compass, in my present remembrance, the past windings of my erring life, and to offer Thee the sacrifice of praise.'² With that guidance, stop, O my soul, and enquire diligently of what sort thy life has been, in which direction it moves, what will be its wages, its result, its end hereafter.

There came a season to the Psalmist, wherein he began thus to ponder his ways. Before this, he had not thought on them; the time, given for it before, had been lost; he must redeem the time; the hour was late, but the minutes were still going; it was late, and *therefore* he 'delayed not;' it was very late, and so he made great haste; the account was long, but he would set to work at once, and reckon it up. There was much to think on: not one day

¹ See the marvellous description of 'memory,' given by S. Augustine, in the Tenth Book of his *Confessions*.

² A Prayer of S. Augustine.

of evil-doing, but many; not one sin, but sins more in number than the hairs of his head; not one way of sin, but many ways; 'my ways' were to be thought on; my ways of self-pleasing and negligence and sloth; my 'way of lying,' and of half-sincerity, and of dissimulation; my bye-ways of wrong motive, of secret worldliness, of hidden pride; my paths of passion and of prejudice; those down-hill roads by which I have travelled, of self-indulgence and carelessness, and easy living; those winding tracks in which I have lost myself, because I would not, by straightforward honesty of purpose, by steady uprightness of heart, keep fast hold of God. All these my ways—some of them wanderings from childhood upwards, some of them the errors of yesterday—many backslidings, many shortcomings—ways partly of wilful and presumptuous sin, partly of unguarded lips and spirit—ways in which we met the tempter unawares, or along which we rushed into temptation—yea! all my ways, leading through the thick forest, where I was concealed from others, or through the crowded city, where I was disguised from myself, or over the dark mountains, where my feet so often stumbled, or along the low valleys, where earthly love beguiled me, or amidst the desolate wilderness, where the guiding signs seemed to fail me utterly—all these I counted up. Well was it, for they were separate from God; they were not His; *His* way had still

to be sought. Finding where I was, how far, O my God, from Thee, 'I turned my feet *unto* Thy testimonies:' before, they were turned other ways; now, they shall be turned unto Thee.

Lo! we have left the self-search of the Psalmist, for it has merged into our own. At least, it must be so, if we desire that Peace, which is the gift of God. If for such an one—for a man by whom the Lord has given us the spiritual songs of the Sanctuary—it had been necessary to think on and recount his ways, and so to return to God; what shall we judge as to ourselves? How can it be safe for any one of us to go on yet a day longer, without this knowledge of his own past life? 'how can we be forgiven our sins, unless we repent of them? or repent of them, unless we know them? or know them, unless we think on them?'¹ How can we make up, under the Cross, for lost time, unless we have a godly sorrow for the waste itself? and how can we sorrow for it in a true manner, and not as dissemblers with God, until we have examined well our bygone years—our misuse of them—our prolonged unfruitfulness in them—the way in which we have filled them with our sins, with our neglects of grace, with our want of gratitude to God—the way in which we have marked them by our growth in stature, in bodily strength, in powers of mind, in natural accomplishments, in everything except 'the

¹ Dr. Pusey's Sermons, vol. i., p. 166. Fourth edition.

knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,'¹ and the holiness which is gained thereby?

No man can be saved by the multitude of the host of sinners, with whom he walks day by day on the broad way. Nay! Our Lord Himself in His merciful Love reminds us, that, *though* many go thereby, it yet 'leadeth to destruction.'²

No man can deliver his own soul apart from Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ is not found except on the path of repentance; and we can never repent without thought.

No man can keep to the narrow road, without taking heed to his steps; or know whether he *has* kept it, without looking carefully at it, and tracing back the print of his feet.

No man can be quite sure that he is not deceiving himself as to his own present course in life, who does not try to see his *whole* self. To-day's act of gluttony, or temper, or vanity, may be a small thing in itself; but, when added to a like sin yesterday, and the day before, and many previous days, it marks the direction in which we are moving. What if the *habit* is still unrepented of, and the *repeated* acts of sin? we must think well about this, or all may be wrong.

No man can master a fault for Christ, even though he may *grow out of it*, unless, with much pain, he draw forth its root, which may be deep

¹ 2 S. Peter, iii. 18.

² S. Matt. vii. 13.

down among the sins and offences of his youth, or the early disobediences of his childhood : and who can dig without attention ? who can travel back twenty or thirty years without earnest diligent *thought* ?

Most mercifully, therefore, Brethren, does God say to each of us, 'Consider your ways.' Note in yourself the beginning of evil—the formation of habits—the first turning out of the way. See what you have to repent of. Prove your own self, whether you have lived 'in the faith'¹—not only seeking to find what have been your deeds, words, thoughts, but *why* you have been doing, and speaking, and thinking thus—whether you have spent your life for God, or for self. There is a time in most men's lives, when God thus speaks to them—'days and moments, quickly flying,' yet winged with messages of mercy to the soul—days of special sorrow in loneliness or bodily anguish—moments of sudden fear, or of startling impressions from without—days of weary waiting, in which we are taught the abiding nearness, the satisfying Presence of the Lord—moments of terrible disappointment, fraught with unspeakable opportunities of seeking God without delay—times in which He meets us with the drawn sword, or the uplifted Cross, and bids us, by our fears or our hopes, return to the place where the two ways meet, and take,

¹ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

with the lowly Jesus, the path which leads to Jerusalem ; for this and the other will soon be as far apart as Heaven and hell.

To neglect this examination of life, to be content with the general confession that we are miserable sinners, without honestly probing the wounds which sin has made in our hearts, is in truth, be assured, to imperil the soul. We do indeed sum up everything, when we beseech Him, for His Son's sake, to 'forgive us all that is past ;'¹ but that can be, to an earnest communicant, to a true penitent, no mere convenient form, short and therefore easy, but rather the sad and sorrowful acknowledgement of a *burden* in the past too heavy for us to bear, of sin added unto sin, of negligences so numerous that we cannot count them, of the many special misdeeds which we have already specially confessed, but which we keep ever before us.

But then this reminds us of some cautions necessary for us in this self-scrutiny, which our Judge requires of us all.

I. First, we must beware of that remorse which ends in despair. Not humility only, but hope and humility, must be our supports under this weight of transgression. In thinking on our ways, we must think also upon God ; amid the tears of repentance for that which cannot be undone, there must ever be, in reliance on our Father, the 'true unconquerable

¹ The Confession in the Communion Service.

purpose to begin the struggle anew.' It is surely a comforting reflection, that 'to have erred in one branch of our duties does not unfit us for the performance of all the rest, unless we suffer the dark spot to spread over our whole nature.'¹ Though we must look humbly backward, in order to look confidently forward, we must also look upward, lest, looking only inward upon ourselves, we lose sight of the enduring mercy of our God.

II. And next, for this reason, we should not be always brooding over the lost days of our life. Daily repentance is indeed necessary, because of our daily sins; and we must be constantly examining ourselves, so as to know our weakness and unworthiness, and to pray more earnestly in the agony of a true penitent heart. But a remorseful morbid sorrow weakens instead of strengthening our spirit; and since God has other work for us to do besides repentance, it is surely best for us to leave this to its proper time.² Do not be always harping on the same sad string. But when Advent comes,

¹ *Friends in Council*, vol. i., p. 41, with the quotation from T. Carlyle.

² What applies to a whole life, holds good also of the faults of any single day. Someone has wisely said, that we should divide our day into portions: so, if we fail in the first, we need not, on that account, make the entire day unprofitable. Instead of losing more time, by lamenting, from twelve till three, our idleness from nine till twelve, we should vigorously finish something in those later hours, and at night confess the earlier negligence.

with its warning of approaching judgment; or Lent, with its call to the humbling of the soul through the fast of the body; or your birth-day, with its many memories of the days that are no more; or the opening of a New Year, with its fresh opportunities for a better and purer and braver life—*then* think well on your ways. So shall that particular season bring you nearer to God, and make you more welcome to Him who despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart.

III. Then further, that no sin may escape you, and no scruple torment you, take with you ‘the candle of the Lord.’¹ Pray Him to shew you clearly what you have been. ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’² As ‘it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,’³ so we cannot, without His guidance, find the measure of our wanderings, or the depth of our transgression. Only to His Eye is all our path plain; only by His Spirit, by the rule of His Word, by the light of His great Example, by the record of His Love for sinners, can we learn at once the holiness required of us, and the merciful allowance which He makes for us, each and all. And thus shall we not only be set free from the restlessness of an over-sensitive conscience, but

¹ Prov. xx. 27.

² Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

³ Jeremiah, x. 23.

shall also have taken from us all vain and frivolous excuses, all blindness and partiality towards ourselves, all ignorance of our true state as it is seen by Him.

IV. And once more, let what has just been said remind you, that though the reflections of sin are dark and long, yet the Shadow of the Cross lengthens out to cover them all. Be under the Eye of Jesus as you look back. Keep close to 'Christ crucified,' when you think of mis-spent moments, and of careless years. For in that awful yet blessed nearness to Him, in that oft-repeated Communion with Him, you will apprehend, not only the disease, but the Remedy.¹ Penitence indeed will be deepened, for you will remember how again and again you have all but crucified Him afresh; but the consolation of His Precious Blood will be deepened too in your heart, for you will remember that He died for *you*.

How, as you thus think on your ways, that sorrow and that comfort will be imparted—how pardon for the past and peace for the future will be gained—*how* your shame for sin and your glory in the Saviour will be quickened—we will see, if all be well, another day. And meanwhile, let us be assured of this, that, as all true contrition is of God, so in the end, if we will but wait on Him, 'the times of refreshing shall come from the

¹ See Bishop Pearson on the Creed. 'The Forgiveness of Sins.'

Presence of the Lord.’¹ Hasten thou and linger not; and very soon, though thou *seest* Him, thou shalt live, and call upon His Name. ‘He,’ (says the writer, to whom so many of us owe, under God, the blessing of spiritual restoration,) ‘He, if in earnest thou seek Him now, and give thyself wholly to Him, will give thee back all that thou hast lost: the Grace thou hast wasted; the Love thou hast chilled; the Purity thou hast stained; His Spirit which thou hast grieved. He, in the residue of thy years, will accomplish in thee all His work, will form thee to the full stature of His grace and Love for which He made thee, that thou mayest love Him,’ (as indeed He loveth thee,) ‘with an everlasting love.’²

¹ Acts, iii. 19.

² Dr. Pusey’s Sermons, vol. i., p. 171.

SERMON V.

CONFESSION.

Sunday next before Advent.

PROVERBS, xxviii. 13.

'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.'

TO come to oneself is the first step towards going to the Father. To look steadily at our past ways is the beginning of that blessed change which moves us, as penitents and believers, to the newness of a life hid with Christ in God. But before we can in earnestness and comfort turn our feet unto His testimonies, before we can learn acceptably to keep His commandments, we have a work of self-abasement to do. The kiss of assured peace, the ring of a confidence restored,¹ will not be granted to the son who has 'wasted his substance,' until he sets out on that homeward journey, which is undertaken with the hearty resolution to tell all that is past—to own present unworthiness—and to

¹ S. Luke, xv. 22.

ask, in the deep humility of an erring child, a place of service and of grace for the time yet future. Our sins, revealed to us, must not be covered by us. Nay, they *cannot* be so covered; for it is only the robe of Christ's Righteousness, the garment of the salvation of God, that can prevent the shame of our nakedness from appearing.¹ To rely on anything else to blot out the transgressions of a life-time, or the faults which we have committed this morning, would be to 'cover with a covering not of' God's 'Spirit, that' we might 'add sin to sin.'² What else were it, to flatter ourselves with the world's frivolous excuse that we have but acted as the rest, or with the sceptic's baseless argument that God could not punish us eternally, or with our own idle notion that we have done no harm, and that our habits are not like those of the extortioner, the unjust, or the adulterer—what else but to 'strengthen' ourselves 'in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt?'³ What else but to draw down upon ourselves that wrath of God, under which, except we repent, we shall perish?

My Friends, that still small voice which speaks within our conscience of the sins which we have done and the duties which we have left undone, must not die away into silence, but must wake up,

¹ Rev. iii. 18.

² Isaiah, xxx. 1.

³ Isaiah, xxx. 2.

under the pressure of our fears, as the utterance of our heart's sorrow before God—the complaint which is to enter into His Ears, and bring His mercy to our contrite souls, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

I. First, then, if we would indeed gain peace as to the many evil deeds and words and thoughts of our life, if we would wish to have our heart *so* set at liberty that for the days yet remaining we may '*run* the way of' God's 'commandments,'¹ we must not refrain from declaring to Him in repentance what He has shewn us in love. As the inward belief in our Lord must be outwardly professed in order to win for us that strong salvation of His, so the inward conviction of our own exceeding sinfulness must be offered to Him by some outward expression if we would gain in fullest measure the blessing of His pardon. It is not, of course, that He, from Whom no secrets are hid, requires for Himself to be informed about our spiritual condition.² But rather, since our bodies as well as our souls are made by Him, since with our bodies as well as with our souls we sin against Him, since our body as much as our soul is His temple, since for our body no less than for our soul we are expecting

¹ Psalm cxix. 32.

² Cf. S. Aug. Conf. v. 1 :—'For he does not teach Thee, who confesses to Thee his secret deeds; for the closed heart is not closed to Thine Eye.'

redemption hereafter—it seems to follow that our body, equally with our soul, should have its share of *humiliation* for sin, and that the bodily organs, not *only* the soul's desires, should take part in that return to God in which we arise, not merely to go unto our Father, but also to *speak* unto Him. It is worse than useless to go on brooding and brooding over our sins, weeping in secret places for our pride and our renewed impurity and our continued disobedience, and spending hours of precious time in vain regrets over our wasteful loss of God's great gifts—worse than useless, except we learn thereby, through the misery of our own mind and conscience, to go out of ourselves to Him, Who is our Peace, and in Whom alone we can find rest unto our souls. 'While I held my tongue, my bones consumed away through my daily complaining.'¹ The heavy Hand was not removed, the agony-drought found no relief, while I went on mourning by myself. But at last, 'I said, "I will confess my sins unto the Lord," and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.'² This is the experience of most true penitents. In the outset darkness and loneliness—a heavy burden pressing down the alarmed and uneasy heart—the very body often suffering from the mind's distress—the wearing sense of guilt abiding within—the foreboding of punishment most righteously deserved—the thought

¹ Psalm xxxii. 3.² Psalm xxxii. 5.

of the loss of God. Then the dread of the hard Task-master, of the iron Judge, of those awful Eyes too pure to behold iniquity—gradually melting into the most comfortable belief in a loving Father, personally caring for the soul even in its wilful wanderings, and longing for its restoration. Then ‘the terror of the Lord,’ blended with the constraining ‘love of Christ,’¹ forcing us, as with kindled fire, to speak with our tongue, and to give glory to God by telling Him what we have done, and owning that it is in *His* sight that we have sinned. It may not be at once that peace is granted. Even at the gate of my King’s Palace I may have to wait awhile, as *He* has had to wait these many years at the door of my closed heart. It may seem, as I stand without and knock, that there is for me ‘no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regardeth.’ Yet none the less am I to direct my prayer unto Him, none the less am I to call upon His Name ‘out of the low dungeon’² where my feet are sinking in the mire; for indeed at the last He will draw near with His word of compassion, ‘Fear not, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.’ For doubtless the promise of God standeth sure, whatever be the ebb and flow of my spiritual being. ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’³

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14.² Lam. iii. 55.³ 1 S. John, i. 9.

This direct communing with God, this frank and full acknowledgement of our ways to Him, this pouring out of our hearts before Him, Who is our only Hope—is the first and chiefest duty laid upon us in the upward path of repentance for sin. Blessed are they who fulfil it and find mercy!

II. But are we then to think that this is all? Is it only in our chamber, only in our secret intercourse with Heaven, that we are to be taught the bitter yet most wholesome lesson of self-abasement? Are our lives so separate from others, have our faults so little to do with them, are we so independent of the Divinely appointed ministrations of our fellow-men—that we need no other act of penitence than those which we offer to the Father, trusting to the mediation of His Son? It is indeed most true, that we have no other Advocate to plead our cause; that no one can forgive sins but God only; that as *He* is offended, not only by the evil we commit against Him, but also by our many trespasses against our neighbour, so it is to Him alone that we must go at all times for pardon. ‘Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture?’—‘Confess your faults *one to another*.’¹ As that other command which we have been considering is meant to remind us of the supreme authority of God, and of mercy as His bestowal; so are we taught by *this*, that

¹ S. James, v. 16.

others have a claim upon our regret, that others' interests are bound up with ours, that others are our fellow-helpers unto the Kingdom of God, that others are the witnesses of our walk in life, that others have a work to do for us which we could not do for ourselves, that others are ready to lift us up when we are fallen, and to encourage us onward on the difficult path of perfection. And which of us—if really in earnest, really awake to the perils which beset him on every side—would lightly esteem such aid as that which S. James invites us to use? which of us would not be the better for the *sympathy* of Christian men and women, for a place in their daily prayers, for a word of counsel from them in the hour of temptation and perplexity? And yet, Brethren—over and above all this, besides and beyond these helps to holiness—there is one blessing involved in the accomplishment of this scriptural exhortation, which some of us might at first sight overlook. Confession to others, strange as it may seem to say so, generally makes us more *ashamed* of ourselves and of our sins than direct confession to God. Why would any one of us shrink more from telling *in this congregation* the most wicked deed of his life, than from owning it on his knees before the Almighty God, unto whom our hearts are open already? Because we are more afraid of the scorn, the blame, the judgment, of our brother whom we have seen, than of the 'everlasting

contempt,' the terrible curse, the eternal sentence, of our Lord Whom we have not seen; because, till we have learnt the exceeding sinfulness of sin, we measure offences rather as they are marked by man than as they are hated by God; because shame, like the blush upon the face, is more an affection of the body than a distress of the soul, and therefore is more easily excited by the notice of mortal man than by the invisible Presence of Him Which is a Spirit. And therefore, *because* we are so acted upon, God in His love has made these lower motives, which *might* be 'an occasion of falling,' work for our higher good: we are ashamed to tell father or mother that we have stolen from them, or deceived them—ashamed to tell our friend that we have betrayed his secret—ashamed to tell the wife of our bosom that we have been unfaithful to her—ashamed to tell a sister or a brother that we have been guilty of a falsehood—ashamed to tell those with whom we have had money transactions that we have over-reached or injured them. But we remember God's bidding, and we do tell out these things—some of us—and then the shame which we feel so keenly, becomes to us our 'glory and grace;' for we learn thereby how infinitely *greater* should be our confusion of face before the Holy God. Thereby we learn what it would be to be convicted by Him Who is the *Truth*, of lying—by Him Who is Purity itself, of

repeated uncleanness—by Him Who is so just, of deceitful weights—by Him Who is pitiful as a father, and who loves us more than our mother doth, of base ingratitude and constant rebellion—by Him Who gave Himself for us upon the Cross, of having crucified Him afresh. And so, as our soul is stricken with contrition, our body also joins in the needful humiliation, and like the priest of old, we fall upon our knees, and spread out our hands unto the Lord our God, and say, ‘O my God, I am ashamed and *blush* to lift up my face to *Thee*, my God! for my iniquities are increased over my head.’¹ And then the help, the prayer, the sympathy we spoke of, bears its double fruit as well as the shame; for if an earthly father, a human friend, is ever ready to pardon us, even if we transgress seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again with a repentant cry, how much more will our Father be merciful to us in our lowly prayer for the absolution and remission of our sins—no vain repetition, we must own, in our morning and our evening sacrifice!

III. But then, once more, this may suggest, does indeed naturally suggest, to us yet another mode of that confession to which mercy is promised in God’s Word. If to *Him* we confess, to shew that ours is godly sorrow, and not the deadly remorse

¹ Ezra, ix. 6.

of the world; if to His *'servants*, our fellow-men, we confess, in order to have the shameful sense of sin deepened within us; then surely to His *ministers* also we confess, because they are the special channels of His pardoning grace, and to *them* He hath given power and commandment to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, this absolution and remission of their sins. If God the Son has all judgment committed to Him;¹ if He has said to men of like passions with us, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they *are* remitted unto them;'² if the need which penitents feel is as great now as it was then; if those solemn words are spoken to the priests of this day as much as to the Apostles of that;³—then, my Brethren, it is our duty, as it is indeed our privilege, to use this 'ministry of reconciliation,'⁴ which we find still exercised among us, that so we may gain, in the clergy, not men who have dominion over our faith, but Heaven-sent helpers of our joy.⁵ To say, indeed, that *all* must employ this ordinance of confession as necessary to salvation, would be to go beyond what is written, and to make those sad whom the Lord hath not made sad.⁶ But not to offer

¹ S. John, v. 22.

² *Ib.* xx. 22, 23.

³ See the Service for the Ordering of Priests in the Book of Common Prayer.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 18.

⁵ *Ib.* i. 24.

⁶ See Edward the Sixth's First Prayer Book :—'Those who use

it to any who are suffering from the want of it, not to speak of it to those who are going on in really fatal ignorance of the plague of their own heart, would be to refuse to men, to keep back from men, the special remedy provided for them by their merciful Lord. How shall we, 'ordained for men in things pertaining to God,'¹ refrain from supplying sinners with this bestowal, with which we have been 'put in trust' for them? How shall we look upon souls struggling to be cleansed, and to be free, and to recover lost peace, and not offer them—in the Name of the Saviour of the contrite, 'the Restorer of paths'—the real and blessed comfort of that absolution, which, as coming indeed from Him Who hath 'found a ransom' for us in Himself, shall make their 'flesh fresher than a child's,' so that they may 'return to the days of' their 'youth,'² brought back to purity by the spotless Jesus, that they may strive to continue therein unto their lives' end? No wise man, we should say to such, would neglect any medicine which might tend to heal his sickness. No earnest Christian, painfully conscious as he must be of many falls, would think scorn of any of those gracious means by which God is ready to lift us up. And

confession to God only, not to judge those who confess also to man; and likewise, those who confess to the priest also, not to judge those who confess to God only.'

¹ Hebrews, v. 1.

² Job, xxxiii. 24, 25.

as in that passage of S. James the man who is diseased or weak in body is exhorted to call for the elders or presbyters or priests of the Church, that *they* (not casual friends, but they as appointed by the Lord) may 'pray over him;' ¹ so when the same Apostle urges us to confess our sins one to another, we can scarcely help feeling, that spiritual sickness, spiritual infirmity, must need as much—nay, surely much more—the same spiritual remedy, the same spiritual men. To whom should we go for aid in the unburdening of our heavy-laden souls, save to those whom Jesus Christ has sent into the world so endued with His Spirit, so united to Himself, that whoso heareth them heareth Him? ² If they have not His authority, how can we accept them? If they convey not to us His grace, how can we profit by them? If they are not His stewards, how can we reach His mysteries? But Holy Scripture speaks of imperfect men as 'ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.' ³ Holy Scripture declares to us

¹ S. James, v. 14, 15.

² It is not meant, of course, that we have an *inspired* Clergy, as the Apostles were inspired; but only, that the ministrations of those duly ordained are the ministrations of Him Who sent them. We who are in the priesthood have found not only the best humiliation for ourselves, but also very great comfort, in the assurance that in absolving, blessing, baptizing, interceding, in pleading the Perfect Sacrifice, 'we are but His Hands and His Voice.'

³ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

that the treasure of grace is 'in earthen vessels,' most imperfect men, 'that the excellency of the power may be of God,'¹ and not of them. Holy Scripture has enshrined those words of our Lord, spoken to imperfect men, 'As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.'² Brethren, He is with them alway, even unto the end of the world. The Apostles might die, and those on whom they laid their hands might die, and *their* successors in the ministry might die, as they *have* died, as well. But Jesus evermore continues with His own—'the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,'³ the Same in the graces of His Spirit, the Same in the powers of His ministers, the Same in the Sacraments of His Gospel, the Same in His wonder-working Word, the Same to His never-dying ever-increasing Church, the Same to all penitent sinners, the Same to us. We seek Him, and the Father through Him; and lo! the way is open. We seek Him in deep personal grief for sin; and (praised be His Name!) 'the hand-writing that was against us' is blotted out. We seek Him in the sympathy of the 'members of His Body;' and behold! the shame of our confession passeth away, and we are at peace. We seek Him in the ministrations of His servants; and we regard in them, not their weakness or mortality, but His most glorious Presence, forgiving

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 7.² S. John, xx. 21.³ Hebrews, xiii. 8.

still, as in the days of His Flesh He forgave, '*on earth*;' ¹ and their voice is to us but the conveyance of His message : 'I absolve thee from all thy sins ; thy waste of time, thy lost opportunities, thy neglect of grace—yea ! all thine iniquity is taken away ; go, and sin no more.'

¹ S. Mark, ii. 10.

SERMON VI.

THE DAYS THAT ARE LEFT.

First Sunday in Advent.

S. JOHN, vi. 12.

‘Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.’

HOW do we stand after the confession of our sins? Whither lies our path, when our merciful Lord has forgiven us all that debt? What is His command to me, now that He has fed me, by the hand of His servant, with that restoring supply needful for my hungering thirsty soul? Surely in spiritual things as in natural it is the same. We are to gather up the fragments that remain; to walk on now as those who would indeed redeem the time; to remember—on the vantage-ground to which He has brought us—that repentance looks not only backward, but forward also; that when we have confessed our sins we must forsake them; that the portion yet remaining of that life which we have wasted, must be offered of necessity

to God, and spent, with humble earnestness, in His service.

When the Psalmist had thought on his ways, and found how much evil was therein, he did more than sorrow for them—he did more than recount them to God; he turned his feet unto God's testimonies which he had neglected; yea! he made haste and delayed not to keep those commandments which hitherto he had so grievously forgotten.

And for *us*—who live in the covenant of fulfilment, and not merely in the covenant of promise—the same rule, the same resolution, the same bounden duty holds, only in a much higher degree. For the very grace which we enjoy so abundantly in Christ Jesus, the grace of pardon and acceptance through His infinite and all-satisfying merits, lays on us a far greater obligation to go 'in the strength of that meat,' in the comfort of that Absolution, onwards at once towards the Mount of God, as those who 'are alive from the dead,'¹ called for a brief space to a fresh probation, a new trial-time, wherein to shew our thankfulness to Him Which hath 'redeemed us to God by' His 'Blood.'²

Nay! is not this the real object of that Death of His—not to cleanse men merely, but to quicken them? In Him, our Jesus, Who was to 'be called a Nazarene,'³ we 'behold'—more truly than in

¹ Rom. vi. 13.

² Rev. v. 9.

³ *S. Matt. ii. 23.* The proper Hebrew name of Nazareth was

‘Joshua the son of Josedech,’ His type—‘the Man Whose Name is the Branch,’¹ blossoming and flourishing, (to adopt a thought from one of our old English writers,²) in the blessed remission of our sins, and therefore assuring us of His help for holiness, ‘From Me is thy fruit found.’ For ‘in the flower is hope of fruit in time coming, and in forgiveness hope of grace well to do.’ And as of His power, so of His purpose. He ‘gave Himself for us,’ not only ‘that He might redeem us from all iniquity,’ but specially, that He might ‘purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’³ We are pardoned in order that we may sin no more. We are delivered from the fear of hell because God would have us move forward in hope of Heaven. Repentance is a step, but only a step, on the homeward journey. Without it our feet are turned the wrong way; but would it be safe to rest at the turning-point? Is not the arrow of the Lord, which made our heart shiver as it passed, *beyond* us now, to be sought by us diligently if we would know and act upon the

Nétser. The promised Messiah is expressly called (in Isaiah, xi. 1) a Nétser, i. e. a shoot—‘a rod out of the stem’—of Jesse. ‘The same thought, and under the same image, though rendered by a different word, is found in Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12.’ Hence S. Matthew speaks of the designation as foretold by ‘the prophets.’—See Dict. of the Bible, s. v. ‘Nazarene.’

¹ Zech. vi. 12.

² Chaucer, ‘*The Parson’s Tale*.’

³ Titus, ii. 14.

fullness of God's message to our souls? Not to be touched at all, to have no leisure to listen to the stirring calls of the Holy Ghost, to have no void place in our busy day where Christ may meet us and reason with us about our scarlet sins—is indeed most dreadful; but not simply because we should thus have on earth no foretaste of the terrors of His judgment; rather, because

‘He that lacks time to *mourn*, lacks time to *mend*.
Eternity mourns *that*.’¹

Amendment of life is the true purpose of Divinely-bestowed contrition of heart. ‘Sorrow’ for the past, if it be ‘godly,’ leaves a *work* for us to do—a solemn and great work, for which there are not many hours left, nor much strength in us to do it, but which we *must* do, ere ‘the night cometh when no man *can* work.’ However sad the retrospect, (and for many of us, God knoweth, it is *most* sad,) there is, after all, a road in *front* of us as well. We must traverse it somehow; shall it not be with God? must it not be in the Light of that Countenance which is full of love, and within the sound of that Voice which draws us on towards the bright home of pardoned sinners? Many days and years are in truth gone by, with little or no fruit for Jesus Christ. Yet surely, as He digs about us with the iron chastisements intended to enter into our souls, and warms the cold roots of

¹ Philip van Arteveld.

our evil hearts with the riches of His grace, it is because He accounts us still able to be fruitful for Him, and to increase, in the little while before harvest, 'with the increase of God.'¹ And as (in the comforting words of Jeremy Taylor²) 'what we sow in the minutes and spare portions of a few years, grows up to crowns and sceptres in a happy and a glorious eternity,' so, in the small remnant of our days, a most precious and really acceptable work may be finished for our Lord, if only we set about it in earnest, in thorough reliance upon Him, and with the resolution, at whatever cost, to do our best.

The calls, my Friends, are unmistakeable; loud enough 'to awake' us 'out of sleep;' very clear to us—whether we look around on those who can hear them no more, and who have no more place for repentance, no further space for the life renewed—or whether we look in upon ourselves, who are still alive this day, with sins to be ashamed of, salvation to be worked out, the Cross to carry, and a crown to win. We see in others, about whom we have little hope, what it is to forfeit the priceless opportunities of a life-time; and we see in ourselves, concerning whom even an Apostle might well 'stand in doubt,'³ that if we would not fall short of our promised rest, we must labour

¹ Col. ii. 19.

² *Holy Living*, chap. i. Introd.

³ Gal. iv. 20.

instantly, with all our might, lest darkness overtake us and we die.

I. First, then, Brethren, we must be on our guard against *presumption*. If repentance has issued in peace, and faith hath made us confident, then this 'repentance towards God,' and this 'faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,'¹ will not suffer us to be high-minded, or create in us any spiritual pride; but rather will move us—in that reverent love which 'feareth alway,'² and which giveth 'all diligence'—to 'add to' our 'faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness charity.'³ It is only 'if these things be in' us 'and abound,' that we can be truly said to have 'escaped the corruption that is in the world,' and to be living the life of the regenerate. For God warns us by His Apostle that 'he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.'⁴ For what *was* this purging which the offering of 'the Blood of Christ' obtained for us? What else, I pray you, but the purging of the 'conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'⁵ To 'say that we have fellowship with' the Crucified, though we 'walk

¹ Acts, xx. 21.

² Prov. xxviii. 14.

³ 2 S. Peter, i. 5-7.

⁴ 2 S. Peter, i. 9.

⁵ Heb. ix. 14.

in darkness,' is to 'lie' to ourselves and to God. It is only 'if we walk in the light as *He* is in the light,'¹ that we are assured of the cleansing of our souls. It is only by endeavouring to redeem the time that we can set to our seal that God was true in convincing us of sin, and can manifest the value which we place upon that *plenteous* Redemption which was not ours but His. Where we have failed (and which of us has not failed?) 'by an early and forehanded care to *secure* our time,' we must afterwards diligently *redeem* it; that is, (as the author of the 'Holy Living' explains it,) we must be 'pious and religious in such instances in which formerly we have sinned, and bestow our time especially on such graces the contrary whereof we have formerly practised, doing actions of chastity and temperance with as great a zeal and earnestness as we did once act our *uncleanness*; and then by all arts we must watch against our present and future dangers, from day to day securing our standing;' ² giving in exchange for the time which we thus make our own, the most costly labour we can bestow.

II. And thus, next, we shall learn to beware of *indifference* as to the things of God. So far from thinking that it does not much matter how we spend our days, we shall walk very warily, like men in the midst of snares and perils, with but

¹ 1 S. John, i. 6, 7.

² Chap. i. § i. 20.

one way out of them. Then our first thought every morning will be of God and of His work; and the *offices* of religion will seem no longer irksome tasks, but necessary duties, even if we do not at once find them to be, as we shall at last, our special helps and daily consolations. Then, remembering our negligence, we shall henceforth let nothing interfere with our acts and hours of prayer; like our own Sir Thomas More, who being sent for by the king when he was at his prayers in public, returned answer, he would attend him when he had first performed his service to the *King of kings*.¹ Then we shall put forth all our strength in honouring God, and doing His work; for of *that* time only we 'may be most confident that it is gained, which is prudently and zealously spent in God's service.'²

To those whose pleasure and interest is in the world, it must of course seem a waste of time to devote half an hour on a week-day to the house of prayer; and something quite uncalled for, to rise up early on the Lord's Day, and come before breakfast to the Holy Communion; and an unnecessary toil to read one chapter of God's Word every day; and an act of foolishness to kneel down every morning and speak to an unseen Father. But to one whose chief care is 'how to please God,'³

¹ Jer. Taylor, *Holy Living*, chap. i. 18.

² *Ib.*

³ 1 Thess. iv. 1.

such means as these will be full of reality, and therefore full of comfort; to him it will become a heartfelt joy to put aside for the services of God and the businesses of the Spirit as much as he can, bearing in mind that wise saying, that 'no man is a better merchant than he that lays out his time upon God.' *He* will make as much haste to rise up early on account of the Altar of God, and the unspeakable gifts to be received therefrom, as others are for worldly work and for the meat that perisheth. *He* will be as ready to go *sometimes* (though he cannot often) to join the Church's daily prayers, as he is to go *sometimes* to see his earthly friends. He will esteem the Word of the Lord more than his 'necessary food,'¹ and feel the loss of it a very 'famine,'² and grieve to have been without it so long, and to have stunted his spiritual growth. He, whatever may have been his past shortcomings, will never go forth to his work again without asking God's *blessing* on his work, nor ever lie down again to rest till he has besought the Lord Jesus to bring rest unto his *soul*. Is this *our* rule? Look back, O Christian, on the way in which you have fulfilled the public and private duties of religion; and then, for your very life's sake, gather up the fragments that remain.

III. But when we speak of religious duties, we

¹ Job, xxiii. 12.

² Amos, viii. 11.

must not forget that the common daily life of every man may be so ordered that it may be a *perpetual* serving of God; so that no man can complain that his calling takes him off from religion, for even his worldly employment (if only it be an honest one) should be a means of glorifying the *Great Master*. Special duties, indeed, ought not to be left undone, for they are God's own ordinances; but these others—these of the farm and the merchandize, of the school and the office, of the plough and the spade, of the head and the hand—ought also to be done, in the Name and for the Honour of Jesus Christ. And therefore, next, if we would obey the injunction of our Lord, and live more close to God than we have done, we must take heed never to be *idle*. For idleness is indeed, (as an ancient writer says,) 'the burial of a living man.'¹ Such an one is as if he were dead, useless for the purposes of God and man, with all his talents and powers, which are yet in him, hidden as in the grave. How terrible to trifle away golden hours—to pour one's own life like water on the ground—to pride oneself on having done no harm, when we should have been going about doing good—to be satisfied with the respectable use of a Sunday, when we ought to be serving God truly *all* the days of our life. Do let us recollect, that every single day has its own allotted

¹ Seneca.

labours—its lessons in the school of Christ—its leaves out of the book of His Example—its calls to patience, perseverance, charity, gentleness, temperance, energy, a high aim, a mind set on things above amid the engagements of things below. Consider all these opportunities. Think what a right royal palace you might have built for God, in the days gone by for ever, out of the materials ready to your hand; what a glorious temple you might have become, had you yielded to those guidings of the Spirit which form us, without sound of axe or hammer, into a dwelling meet for His Presence. Oh, look back on the squandered treasures of those ten, or twenty, or thirty years, and resolve, in the strength of the Lord, that from this day nothing shall be lost.

IV. But, once more, there is a ‘sorrow of the world,’ which ‘worketh death;’¹ and the very sense of our miserable failure, which this recollection may awaken in us, might prove a curse to us, and not a blessing. We must never yield to despair; for in our Saviour, if we do but lay on Him our burden, we cannot be as men who have no hope. Our sins, indeed—our wilful wasteful sins—cannot be covered by us; our past iniquity cannot be atoned for by anything which we can do ourselves. Yet it may at least become, as we trample it down, a stone of something better than offence.

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 10.

To take the poet's setting of the father's jewel,
there is real truth in the thought,

‘That of our vices we may frame
A ladder, if we will but tread
Beneath our feet each deed of shame.’¹

Little by little, as we gain, by the grace of God, victory over our besetting sin, we rise to a higher level; to find the peace of purity, instead of the pleasure of pollution; the uplifting power of humility, instead of the painful puffing up of pride; the joy of the Spirit's presence, instead of the fires of drunkenness; the comfort of brotherly love, instead of the disquietude of anger and clamour. You say you have wasted an hour this morning. Well, repent of it, and be occupied *now*; making this your sorrow a fresh starting-point for running the race that is set before you. You feel that the year just closing has marked in you little growth in holiness, much continuance in evil habits. But cannot the writing on the new leaf be bright in comparison? shall it not tell of the good fight, of victory bravely won, of a life of inward peace, through the gradual increase in you of whatsoever

¹ Longfellow. Cf. S. Aug. de Adscens. Domini, I. 4. Sermo clxxvi. in Appendix, class. 2.—‘Ipso affectû pariter et profectû ascendamus post Illum, etiam per vitia et passiones nostras. Quomodo per passiones nostras? Si utique unusquisque nostrum subdere eas sibi studeat, ac super eas stare consuescat, ex ipsis ibi gradum construit, quo possit ad superiora conscendere. Elevabunt nos, si fuerint infra nos. De vitiis nostris scalam nobis facimus, si vitia ipsa calcamus.’

things are pure and lovely and of good report? So let the *experience* of sin make us more careful to turn from it, and the *misery* of sin force us to be joyful only in God; and then we need not be hopeless,

‘Nor deem the irrevocable Past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
To something nobler we attain.’¹

Only, my Brethren, let us make haste, for the time is short. As Advent follows Advent, and the Eternal Husbandman seems to let us alone *this* year also, let us not forsake our own mercies, or forget that this may be the very last sparing of the barren tree, and that if now it be still unfruitful, He will cut it down. It is but a very little while, and the Lord of the vineyard will appear, seeking not the leaves of a mere outward profession, but the fruit of faithful diligence and love. What if He should still ‘find none’?²

We wake up, and we *know* that the time is short. Life at its longest, after the alarm of the conscience, is soon over; the days hurry on—and the weeks, with their heavy burden laid down in humiliating confession beneath the Cross—and the months, in which we grieve over our little progress—and the years, wherein we suffer adversity and are drawn to God; and then the *last* year—the *last*

¹ Longfellow, ‘*The Ladder of S. Augustine.*’

² S. Luke, xiii. 7.

month—the *last* week—the *last* day—and we bring it all to an end; and we are taught then that we did not turn an hour too soon, or bestir ourselves a moment too early, since even then we are ‘scarcely saved.’ Verily, there is no place for presumptuous delay in the things which concern our souls. Life at its longest, assures us all of this.

But recollect, my Friends, that even the shortest remainder has its wonderful opportunities, if we will but use them immediately. Even of the little broken pieces of that heavenly gift which we mean by life, may be taken up seven baskets full—the sacrifices and self-denials and self-conquests of the plenteous week of years, stored, far beyond their natural increase, in the granaries of God. Even the malefactor, ‘in the same condemnation’ with the Crucified, in that brief afternoon of agony and shame fulfilled a long time of penitence and prayer, of faith toward our Lord as God and Man, of the true humility of contrition, of loving fearlessness in rebuke, of patient waiting upon Christ, of looking for that death, which, shared with Jesus, could have no terrors, and that Kingdom, in which, unworthy as he was, he should yet be remembered and received. So, by his life, more even than by his death—by the earnest passionate life of his soul, plucked like a brand out of the burning, more than by the excruciating death which was *rushing* upon his body—he was ‘hasting unto the

coming of the Day of God.’¹ Thus may we be taught by our bitter fellowship with the Cross—the due reward, remember, of our deeds, the tribulation which we rightly suffer—to yield ourselves, whether we live or die, unto the Lord; that so, through the thorough surrender of our wills to His, we too may at the last be ‘accepted in the Beloved;’² justified, sanctified, saved, by the Spirit of our God, and for the worthiness of His Son.

¹ 2 S. Peter, iii. 12.

² Eph. i. 6.

SERMON VII.

THE DIVINE PRESENCE WITHIN US THE HOPE OF OUR RESTORATION.

1 CORINTHIANS, vi. 19.

‘ Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you ?’

SUCH words as these (and you will recollect others like them in Holy Writ¹) remind us of one of the great truths of the spiritual life—the reality of our union with God. Most commonly, in early youth, full manhood, or old age, we need such teaching as a check and bar against falling into deadly sin; it was so intended, evidently, for the members of Christ at Corinth, and doubtless for most of *us*. But there is another aspect in which it may be regarded—from the point of view of those, who, grieving sincerely over the days gone by, and earnestly desirous of amendment ere the course is finished, long for something to fall back upon, not of their own, but of their Lord’s,

¹ See 1 Cor. vi. 15; iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Heb. iii. 6; 2 Tim. i. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 27; Rom. viii. 15.

something amid the wreck of a wasted treasure, wherewith to make merchandise in this world of profit and loss, so as to gain, for Christ's sake, 'the true riches' of eternity.

And this is just what we *do* find in these assurances of God's own Book. For He, who cannot deceive us, plainly declares to us here not our past fortune, but our present state; not what we *were* before we sinned, but what we are though sinners; not what we might be should His grace be given us, but what He has made us already, that we may receive 'grace *for* grace.'¹ Even when the bestowals of God have been most abused, and life's opportunities granted by Him most neglected, there is the old foundation, laid so long ago, on which the penitent may build. In the work of amendment, God has not to begin everything afresh in us; nor is His vital seed dead within us, that He must needs sow it again. It is the *soil* left barren, not the fruitful Word, which has failed. We must indeed, in the outset of our labour for the days that yet remain, bend ourselves to root out evil habits, and to clear away the hindrances to our steady increase. Wandering feet must be restored to the way of peace, and rebel hearts be reminded of the excellence of the guidance of God. But we do not return to the entrance of the narrow road; for by that we pass once for all. Rather, we strike

¹ S. John, i. 16.

back into some part of the life-track itself. We cannot a second time 'be baptized for the remission of sins,'¹ or be renewed again unto the repentance of the *convert* approaching 'the Font of regeneration.'² The New Birth, like that of our earthly nature, can be bestowed but once, through the act of God; and therefore, since sin after Baptism is, without controversy, an awful fact with all, save those who die in the freshness of their washing, it follows that we must take up the dropped threads of the higher life, where we let them fall, making haste *then* to finish the work, so sinfully interrupted. And if, as most of us feel, our state before God has never been that of matured 'fathers'³ in the Christian growth, nor even that of 'young men' strong in overcoming the wicked one, but rather that of 'little children,' forgiven for Jesus' sake, and enabled to know the Father, yet drawn off by temptation, and trained by habit to be negligent of the soul; then surely we may well be fearfully afraid and ashamed to find ourselves in the years of a man but in the uselessness of a babe, with as much to do and learn as if it were only the dawning of the day, instead of being close upon sun-set, with the night coming, 'when no man can work.'

And yet for all this it must be repeated, that what God once did for us, He will not again

¹ Acts, ii. 38.

² Titus, iii. 5; *lit.* 'the bath.'

³ 1 S. John, ii. 12-14.

perform. Though we have to make a new start, at the point where we fell asleep, and thence to follow on, *with all our might*, after the swift Fore-runner, the Lord does not again take us up in His Arms, or plunge us into the baptismal water, or lay His pastoral Hands upon us, or give us, as at the first, that peculiar token which marks our admission into His Covenant, or the laying upon us of His charge.

In one sense, this is a very sad thought. It makes the heart sink, to remember that when we were confirmed ¹ we were scarcely ready for it, and that yet we cannot be 'sealed' ² again; or that when we were solemnly set apart for the ministry, we had gone through little heart-preparation for such tremendous duties, and that our ordination is of the careless past, not of this present time, which finds us at least more serious and earnest. Still, the very fact that we *have* these regrets, the very feeling of sorrow for those lost opportunities, brings with it, as from the Author of all true contrition, an

¹ The same may be said, *mutatis mutandis*, as to some who have received Adult Baptism—necessarily the case of many of those disciples addressed in the Epistles. To *infants* we believe that the grace is given in Baptism as an act of God's free love. If we could have any fears as to their capacity for grace, owing to want of faith, we should be obliged also to regard them as incapable of the beatific vision in Heaven, (granted only to those who please God,) since 'without faith it is impossible to please Him.' (*Heb.* xi. 6.) The truth is, that, unlike conversion, regeneration has nothing to do with 'the will of man.' (*S. John*, i. 12, 13.)

² 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13; iv. 30.

actual blessing. For God assures us, that though those doors can be passed but once in life—so that it would be sacrilege to renounce our Orders or our Confirmation, in order to ask for them again—yet grace *was* given; the priesthood *was* conferred upon us; the Spirit, invisible to ‘our blinded sight,’ *did* descend; we *did* become habitations of God through the Spirit,¹ ‘partakers of the Divine Nature,’² bearers ‘in earthen vessels’³ of a ‘Treasure’ celestial.

Let us try to unfold this consolatory doctrine; remembering always, that the Holy Scriptures, which impart it to us, are meant not to lull us into careless sleep, but to arouse us into penitent activity; and that the bestowals of the Lord, offered to us for this moment’s use, may, if we reject them now, be longed for with most bitter and unavailing regret in that Day, ‘when we shall esteem one quarter of an hour a more desirable possession than all the world can give,’ ‘and I know not who shall grant it.’⁴

I. It would seem to be a principle of the Gospel, that those Sacraments and Sacramentals, which can only be received once, do confer some grace upon, and work some actual change in, the person who receives them. Why else should they not, like

¹ Eph. ii. 22.

² 2 S. Peter, i. 4.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 7.

⁴ Fénelon’s ‘*Counsels to Those who are Living in the World*,’ (Bennett’s edition,) p. 110. Cf. Bishop Jeremy Taylor’s ‘*Golden Grove*,’ Fifth Decade.

Absolution or Holy Communion, be sought again and again, so that if, unhappily, the first gift had been lost through carelessness, the penitent might, after deep sorrow for his negligence, at least obtain the next? But if, as the Holy Scriptures and the rules of the Church plainly imply, the repetition of Baptism, Confirmation, Orders, is precluded, then we gather, that upon the recipient of these some such effect has passed, as that he now stands—often in spite of himself, always more or less unconsciously—in a new position to Godward. There may have been no change of heart, but there is a change of relation. He is something that he was not; he cannot go back to his former condition; he has now new responsibilities. As, in the words of our own greatest poet,

‘Not all the waters in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king,’¹

so we cannot be, after these ordinances, what we were before. A ‘royal priesthood’² has been conferred upon us—we cannot, though we renounce it outwardly, really remove the mark: we have not merely Shakespeare’s witness here; we are come to revelations of the Lord. ‘As many of’ us ‘as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.’³ The limbs of the christened ‘are the

¹ Shakespeare—‘Richard II.’

² 1 S. Peter, ii. 9.

³ Gal. iii. 27.

members of Christ.'¹ He is 'the Vine;' they, though they may hereafter be 'cast forth,' are as yet 'the branches.'² The body, which had been born in sin, has been consecrated now as a 'Temple of the Holy Ghost.' He is now *in us*. God '*hath* anointed us, and sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.'³ Our walk *is to be* in Him, because our life *is* in Him.⁴ We '*have* received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father,'⁵ 'forgive us our trespasses.' 'Ye *are* the Temple of the living God,'⁶ cries S. Paul to the very imperfect Corinthians, while warning and exhorting them to come out from the sinful unbelieving world.

II. And this reminds us, that the Spirit's Presence, once granted to us, abides with us. Often indeed the gift lies dormant, like a smouldering fire, yet as one that might be kindled into the burning flame of Christian zeal, unexercised for years, though holding in itself the power of renewing us. As the flax, when Jesus came, was smoking still, so that He in His mercy would not quench it, thus even in the soul most debased He beholds the germ of better things, faint reminiscences of 'God who is our Home,'⁷ traces of an influence

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 15. ² S. John, xv. 1, 2, 6. ³ 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

⁴ Gal. v. 25. ⁵ Rom. viii. 15. ⁶ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

⁷ See Wordsworth's Ode on '*Intimations of Immortality, from Recollections of Early Childhood.*'

from above. And though to us little or nothing of this may appear, though we detect, in others and specially in ourselves, the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, yet the consciousness that there *is* a struggle, that we do not yield with perfect self-satisfaction to the tempter, may serve to shew us that we are not alone, after all, like brute beasts yielding to their natural instincts, but that we have indeed a Holy Spirit with us, Whose desires are contrary to the flesh, and through Whom we can, if we will, 'be strong in the Lord.' And so, even when we have transgressed most grievously against Him, and feel in bitterest need of the cleansing of our hearts, our prayer to God is not so much a petition for the descent of an absent Comforter, as that familiar one of the militant Church: 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit *from* me.'

III. Answering to this, we have the continuance of this indwelling urged upon us, (as has been already suggested,) as an argument against yielding to carnal appetite. 'What! know ye not that your body *is*' God's—'joined to the Lord,' His Perfect Son—occupied by His most pure and glorious Spirit? ¹ The sin of a Christian specially consists in this: that he is grieving a Present God, doing 'despite to the Spirit of grace' ² within himself,

¹ It will be noticed that all these three several propositions are contained in the last few verses of this chapter. 1 Cor. vi. 15-20.

² Hebrews, x. 29.

refusing to bring forth fruit in the very fruitful Tree into which he has been grafted. His deeds of shame are suicidal acts. He is sinning 'against his own body,'¹ alienating it from Christ the Lord to Whom it belongs. Surely, all this implies, that we have not only had a new nature given us, in order that we may not sin, because we are 'born of God,'² but also have His seed remaining in us; so that through all the stages of increase, temptation, backsliding, dallying with evil, giving way, sinking into sensual habits, we cannot 'be as the heathen.' Our present life must not be separated from our Baptism. For 'the gifts and calling of God,'³ conveyed therein, are not revoked through any change in Him, but rather abide with us, for our blessing or our condemnation.

IV. And if, even when we are sinning, and in peril of destruction, this can be said to us, surely when we repent and desire to do better, it is a special comfort and stay to know, that this Holy Ever-present One links us to the past, and is an earnest to us of the glorious future which may yet be ours. In His Communion, realized at length, we have one true help towards the restoration of lost time; for in it lost *grace* is regained. Even to those who required much sharpness and severity, the Apostolic question, you remember, was this:

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 18.

² 1 S. John, iii. 9.

³ Romans, xi. 29.

‘Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ *is in you*, except ye be reprobates?’¹ And need we in our repentance fear lest His Presence should have been withdrawn, as if we had indeed committed the unpardonable sin? Nay! our very fears, as inwrought by God, are a proof to us that He has *not* forsaken us, that we have not driven Him utterly away, that we are not deprived of all sense of shame or reverence, that we can yet ‘stand the test’ of the heart-searching Lord, since He marks in us the desire which we now have unto His Name.² And so, since we are *not* reprobate, Christ is in us; and where He is, there is His Spirit, the blessed ‘Giver of life,’ and Restorer of our souls. Still less then need we dread that He has never been with us—that to us the ordinances and sacraments of God have been indeed ‘of none effect,’ because void from the very first. Let us not deem so of the grace of God. It is of course most true, that lack of faith or of seriousness impair the full working in us of God’s Almighty Power; but the Power is there, ready to flow forth, when the choked up channels are re-opened. As ‘there is hope of a tree, if it be *cut down*, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof

¹ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

² The word translated ‘reprobate’ here, and in 1 Cor. ix. 27 ‘cast-away,’ means that the person or thing so described, cannot, when put to the proof, bear examination, and therefore is rejected: *ex. gr.* base coin.

will not cease,' so that, 'though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant;'¹ so also may we, only much much more, (because yearned after with a far greater and more quickening Love as God's *new* creation,) we—so stunted from the height of our Christian stature, and all but dead awhile in trespasses and sins—hope to flourish yet again, through the gentle dew of the heavenly grace, as branches which the Lord my God had planted long ago for Himself. The brightness of those early hours, with their grand opportunities, of which we did not then avail ourselves, may have faded from us; but as we truly turn to Him Who has been close to us all the while, His offered gift becomes instinct with life, His adoption of us very real and most full of comfort, His Liberty and Fellowship, as 'taken up' by us, new help and light to our darkened slothful hearts:

'It yet shall be, that thou at last,
Although thy noon be lost, return
To bind life's eve in union fast
To this its blessed morn.'

V. And what is the purpose of this revived sense of the dew of God's Blessing—this later consciousness of our having received, many months or years

¹ Job, xiv. 7-9.

ago, the healthful spirit of His grace? Surely that, making use of it now, we may be encouraged to go on with the duties which lie before us. Take, for instance, the case of a clergyman—a case in which you are perhaps only indirectly interested, but one which you may be not unwilling to remember in your anxious prayers for those ‘who are over you in the Lord.’¹ You would—it may be—find among these, some who have at times experienced the painful feeling of original unfitness for their sacred office, and have even allowed themselves the intense wish that they had never been made priests. Yet how much better such have found it to persevere, doing their very best! And O how glorious for us to know, that, though we were *once* ill-prepared, and though we are *now* most unworthy, yet a good work and effectual can be done by us yet for the lost souls of men and women, and for the building up, in His Faith and Fear, of the little ones of Jesus—a *good* work, because accepted for His sake from the sincere repentance of our hearts; and most *effectual*, as wrought in the might of that Eternal Spirit, whose comfort, forfeited awhile, has been, by the mercy of God, recovered for us yet again! What *could* we finish in life, if we did turn back, compared with *this*? What joy can there be in the world’s success or favour, so sweet as *his*, who is recovered out of a

¹ 1 Thess. v. 12; Heb. xiii. 18, 19.

state of carelessness, to do, like Mark the saint restored, 'the work of an Evangelist'?¹ May we be of good cheer, and press forward for the closing scenes of the Great Battle, taking shame to ourselves, and giving praise to God by the later diligence of our lives!

But whether the gifts received were, as in this case, ministerial, or, as far more often, personal, the lesson is practically the same: not to sink back in despair at our former callousness and indifference, but to move now at any rate, in that Light, which, though in us, has been as darkness, and that strength, which, because unused, has not raised us hitherto above our natural infirmity. Realize Whose you are, and what He has made you. Forget not the benefit of His benediction and grace, the 'unction from the Holy One,' Who came to open the blind eyes; but in the backward glance of the sight at last restored, 'glorify God in your body and in your spirit,' because they '*are* His.'

And therefore finally, my Brethren, whatever you may have been in the past, take to yourselves now those Apostolic exhortations, which apply in measure to us all, whether we be priests or people. '*Stir up* the gift of God which is in thee.'² Do not merely lament its neglect, but use it rather for that work which He has given you to do. 'Quench

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 5. Cf. Acts, xii. 25, xiii. 13, xv. 37-39, with 2 Tim. iv. 11.

² 2 Tim. i. 6.

not the Spirit.’¹ The anointing which ye have received abideth in you still; suffer it not to grow less and less each day, but let it be quickened by the earnest breath of your penitent prayer into ‘comfort, life, and fire of love.’ ‘Receive not the grace of God,’ which was granted, ‘in vain;’² but manifest it, ‘as dear children,’ in the humble faithful following of Him, Whose Image grace can fashion in you. We were changed, that we might remain new creatures—‘born again for a higher world,’³ and for the walk with our Father, even on earth; saved out of *this* world, which, with all its lusts, is passing away, in order that, becoming little by little spiritually-minded, the true sons and daughters of God, we might have peace with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, and, as living stones in the Glorious Temple, ‘joy in the Holy Ghost.’⁴

¹ 1 Thess. v. 19.

² 2 Cor. vi. 1.

³ Bishop Armstrong, in ‘*Sermons for the Christian Seasons.*’

⁴ Romans, xiv. 17.

SERMON VIII.

THE EXERCISE OF THE MIND:—STUDY OF
HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Second Sunday in Advent.

2 TIMOTHY, iii. 16.

‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.’

WHEN we resolve, by God’s grace, to make a better use of the days that remain, and, as living in the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, few things, next to the wilful and presumptuous sins which we have done, are more painful to us than the recollection of having wasted on the pleasures of a season the time intended for Christ’s enduring work, and of having left to the last that duty which everyone of us should have practised ‘from a child’¹—the study of His unchanging Word, whereby the Holy Ghost would have kept our feet from wandering away. If, in looking back on the years which we

¹ 2 Timothy, iii. 15.

spent at school, it fills us with remorse to remember how little we really improved our mind or used our talents, how slow, through carelessness and sloth, was our progress in reading, how poorly we profited in the sound and healthful knowledge opened out for us, in its measure, by every book in which we were instructed; and if we reckon it among the serious shortcomings of our manhood, that we gave little or no attention to reading, skimming perhaps the pages of some smooth-running novel, but not really applying ourselves with diligence to sources of useful information—the shame and distress must surely be increased a thousand fold, when it is borne in upon us, how little, early or late, we have known the *Holy* Scriptures, how indifferent we have been as to the sweet yet awful Voice which speaks to us therefrom, how ready we have been to throw them aside for what we called more interesting matter, choosing the fresh fancies of a newspaper, rather than the old truths of the word of the Lord, and sinking to the low level of worldly publications, instead of rising to the high standard of the revelations of the Holy Ghost. Nay! it may be, that we have even been zealous students of almost every subject under the sun, *except* this; fond of history, poetry, biography, letters, wonderful occurrences, fairy tales, amusing conversations, but thoroughly negligent of that One Sacred Volume, which *teems* with varied history, with the most

glorious poetry, with the lives of good and evil men and women, with the Epistles of the Spirit, with the miracles of two dispensations, with bright and beautiful allegories and parables, with prayings and prophesyings, wherein man doth talk with God and God with man. All this remembrance, I say, is most humiliating to us, when once we have been brought to be thoroughly in earnest about the things which concern our souls. Most sad is it to have to reflect, how study such as this might, had we exercised ourselves therein, have tended to instruct, warn, comfort us, just when we sorely *wanted* comfort, warning, instruction: how such study might have made us patient in time of adversity,¹ steadfast in the hour of temptation, watchful when our standing seemed secure: how greatly it would have increased our power of helping others, our humility towards them, our care for their souls: what liberty we should have gained thereby from the sin which doth so easily beset us, and the doubts which so often cause us perplexity: what powerful remedies it would have given us against the

¹ Isabel Hood, a flax-spinner, in Elgin, earning rather less than twopence a-day, lived in the garret of a small house, with a thatched roof and a clay floor, a small grate, and one pane in the thatch; but from thence might be heard such utterances as these over an open Bible: 'Glory, glory to Him for His blessed Word, and for the light which He has given me on it. The valley of the shadow of death is called dark, but He is brightening up my ways. O what glory!'—*Sunbeams in the Cot age.*

hardening of our hearts into bad habits, and how thoroughly it would have furnished us, as wise children of God, 'unto all good works.'¹ And then, even when we have arisen, with true sorrow and changed purpose, to go to our Father, and have taken up His Word to be a lantern to our returning feet, and a light unto our homeward path; when, wakening our ear morning by morning, we hearken diligently with much heed to the still small Voice which breathes in those pages yet, and learn what the Lord would have us do; when, night after night, we get to sanctify the eventide with some verses of a Psalm, or a lesson from the Gospel, or one of the sweet and exceeding precious promises of Jesus Christ—we are reminded, to our sorrow, of the great portion of life which has passed away, *without* this searching of the Scriptures, *without* our esteeming these as our necessary daily food, *without* our finding in them constantly God's own message to our souls; and together with this bitter regret, we know that, in one sense, we cannot make up for those wasted opportunities by present application; since *this* year now with us, this day which we are spending as we speak, must itself be occupied by the study, as by the duty, appointed for *it*; so that, in a manner, we are behind time altogether, and cannot expect, so late in the afternoon, to finish our morning's as well as our evening's work. And yet, it is this very past

¹ 2 Timothy, iii. 17.

neglect of ours, this very loss of so much priceless study-time, for which these Holy Scriptures, if we welcome them heartily now, can yield a remedy. As God is the Healer of all our wounds, even of those which in our folly we inflict upon ourselves, so in this Divine medicine, He gives us not only support for our present needs, but also a purifying balm to ‘cleanse our way.’ His word, as we cherish it at last in our inmost souls, puts forth its redeeming as well as its quickening power. If, through long-continued idleness, we are ignorant of the saving truths of God—Holy Scripture, which still lies open for us, is ‘profitable for *doctrine*.’ If, through our habits of sin, we need more penitence, more wholesome compunction of heart and conscience—Holy Scripture is profitable ‘for *reproof*.’ If, having erred these many years from the narrow path, we require to be brought back—the Holy Scripture can recover us to the Lord, for it is profitable ‘for *correction*.’ If, by reason of our wilful choice of evil in the days gone by, we are in want of discipline, to make us holy, just, and true—this discipline too is provided by the Scriptures, since they are profitable ‘for instruction in righteousness.’ Well may we resolve, as God’s Word thus goeth forth to meet us, to devote ourselves henceforth to the fuller knowledge of it, that so the blessed Spirit, Who inspired it, may by His own utterances ‘anooint and cheer our soiled *face*.’

'O Book! infinite sweetness! let my heart
 Suck every letter, and a honey gain,
 Precious for any grief in any part,
 To clear the breast, to mollify all pain.'¹

I. And so, Brethren, let our first purpose be to read for ourselves, or to have read to us, '*whatsoever* things were written aforetime.'² Most of us are acquainted with certain *parts* of the Bible; but how many are there (ten, shall we say, in almost any congregation you can name?) who know even the letter of the *whole*? Can it be right (think you) thus to pick and choose out of the Revelations of God? It is not meant, of course, that we may not select special passages for special needs, or that particular portions are not adapted to our particular circumstances or character. As there is no one, however sinful, however dark, whose heart might not be reached by *some* verse of Holy Writ, so (as has been strikingly said,) 'there never was a book so little monotonous as the Bible, so continually changing its key, if so be that some, at all events, may be charmed by the Voice of the Heavenly Charmer.'³ But then, for that very reason, by leaving out chapters or pages we may just miss that teaching, that example, that warning, that promise, that exhortation, which God intended for us; and instead of humbly accepting all that He has

¹ George Herbert, '*The Holy Scriptures*.'

² Rom. xv. 4.

³ Dean Goulburn, '*Personal Religion*.' Part II., chap. vi.

revealed, we may find ourselves presumptuously cavilling at one part of the Scripture, because we will not compare it with another. God's Word is very deep, and we have nothing to draw with except God's Word itself, and the interpretation of His Church, which has been, in His Providence, the keeper of it all. How then can we dare to build a theory of our own on some isolated text? Should we not thus (to use our Lord's admonition) be likely to err, because we 'know not the Scriptures?'¹ The Word of God, like His commandment, is exceeding broad; so much so, that the Old and New Testament cover, even in their composition, sixteen hundred years,² and in their events four thousand, and in their scope the beginning and the end—time and eternity. How then, without studying them from Genesis to Revelation, shall we trace their drift—the way their lights combine, the way they illumine each other,

‘Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
But all the constellations of the story?’³

How otherwise shall the priest be able ‘to declare unto you the *whole* counsel of God’? or *you* to decide for yourselves, as did the noble Scripture-searching Berceans, ‘whether these things are so’?⁴ Can we really afford to part with anything which

¹ St. Mark, xii. 24.

² i. e. from the Book of Job to the Gospel according to St. John.

³ G. Herbert.

⁴ Acts, xvii. 11.

the Lord hath bestowed upon us? Nay! this was of our indolence in the past; but the zealous 'carefulness' wrought in us by our repentance, will not suffer us to do so now.

II. Then next—and as one result of this thoroughness—we shall ascertain the actual facts of the Bible-narrative. Depend upon it, it is of the highest importance that we should do so. How often, at present, we get distorted views of Scripture-truth, either because we have never really studied it, or because we do not refresh our knowledge again and again, or because we make God's Word fit in with our prejudices! how often we gather hazy notions of its import, because, instead of going to the fountain head ourselves, we trust to the shallow and one-sided reports of others! how often we mix up truth and tradition, the devotions of men with the doctrines of God, the familiar sentences of the Prayer Book with what we must fain confess are the less-known declarations of the Bible, as thousands do (for instance) in the case of that pathetic cry of the Burial Service, 'In the midst of life we are in death!' It is quite right that we should feel the beauty and the force of these expressions of the Church's mind, these formulas of her faith, these modes by which the Holy Ghost enables her to make known the manifold wisdom of God.¹ Only, let us recollect, that a line is drawn between all this,

¹ Ephesians, iii. 10.

and the records of the same Spirit as *written* for us. Be it our care to distinguish one from the other; and to do so, not by despising the Church's Creeds or Prayers, lest haply we be found even to fight against God, but by a more earnest more faithful perusal of the Book of books. So shall we learn not to mistake the glorious pictures of 'Paradise Lost' for the descriptions of Moses, nor to confuse the scenes of 'the Pilgrim's Progress,' however helpful to us, with the real life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So shall we take our version of that Gospel itself, not from any fanciful allegory of men, but from those Apostles of our Lord, who were 'eye-witnesses of His Majesty,'¹ and hearers of the Voice from Heaven which testified His Sonship. So too will the different persons, whom the sacred writers portray to the life, become to us no longer like mere shadows with which we have no concern, but breathing men and women of like passions with ourselves, real warnings or examples to us; very sinful yet penitent Manasseh²—Judas Iscariot, admonished yet self-destroyed—Peter the warm-hearted, lacking in moral courage—David, the man after God's own heart, yet still full of imperfections—Noah, so just and holy, yet overtaken in a fault—Lot's wife, almost saved, yet absolutely lost—Sarah, a blessing to Abraham, but laughing in unbelief, and trying to hide one sin by

¹ 2 S. Peter, i. 16, 17.

² 2 Chron. xxxiii. 18, 19.

another—Esau, so good-natured, yet so ‘profane’¹ that his good nature profited him nothing—Joseph, so sorely tempted, yet so pure—Martha, so full of service, that she had no time for the one thing needful—S. Paul, so weak in body, yet so strong in faith, and so vigorous in working. These, and a thousand others, stand out clearly before us, that we may find, in their characters, some lesson for ourselves. And amid them all, one august Figure seems to move before us—speaking to us as never man spake, shewing us what life was meant to be, evidently set forth to us as living, tempted, suffering, crucified, risen, glorified, really our Brother and really our Lord. Study, I pray you, that spotless Life, that awful Death—and grow in all possible ‘knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’²

III. One other counsel, Brethren. S. Peter, when he declares to us what *he* had heard and seen of this Holy One—this beloved Son of God—goes on to say, ‘We have a *more* sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.’³ For in these wonderful prophecies, which ‘came not in old time by the will of man, but’ which ‘holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,’⁴ we have the germ of what has been, is, and is to come.

¹ Hebrews, xii. 16.

² 2 S. Peter, iii. 18.

³ 2 S. Peter, i. 19.

⁴ Ib. 21.

In their fulfilment we have the gradual unfolding of the purposes of God for us men and for our salvation. Read the prophecies of the Old Testament, spoken to and kept by the Jewish people, remember; mark how their accomplishment actually created the Christian Church, as one by one they were proved true in Jesus. Study the predictions of the New Testament, witnessed, as you know, by the Christian Church. Yet do not they too point to the final restoration of the Jewish people, saved with the followers of Christ, to be the true 'Israel of God'?¹ Compare those of the Old Testament *and* the New; see how they all centre round the One in whom we have believed; notice how from first to last 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,'² and little by little the darkness will pass away, and the true light will shine within you, and you will wait patiently for the final consummation, the establishment of everything which 'God spake in time past by the prophets,' *and* of everything which 'in these last days He hath spoken unto us by His Son.'³

So, my friends, let him which hath God's Word keep it—search it—learn to live by it. To all of us, notwithstanding past years of negligence, if we will but study now, the gift of an understanding heart shall yet be granted. To no one among us—if he will but hear these Holy Scriptures, or read them, if he can, himself, and learn them, to be

¹ *Gal. vi. 16.*² *Rev. xix. 10.*³ *Heb. i. 1, 2.*

stored up in his mind, and digest them inwardly with a true penitent heart and lively faith—shall the key of this Divine knowledge be denied. From the heart of each, as he truly ‘turns to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away,’¹—that triple vail of ignorance and sin and unbelief; and the Holy Ghost shall enable him to ‘say that Jesus is the Lord;’² and Jesus Himself—‘the Lord God of all the holy prophets,’³ which ‘sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must’ come to pass—shall bear witness of Himself, as the promised King of the Old Testament, the foreheralded Light of the New: ‘I am the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star.’ May He so speak to *us*! may He, as we do His will, delivered to us once for all in His Holy Word, open our blinded eyes, that we may know also of the doctrine declared to us therein! May He put His Law into our inward parts, and write it in our hearts, that we may be purified and cheered thereby! And that, surely, is the very property, always, of His Word, to give ‘light and understanding’⁴ to all those who strive, even in the close of their days, to abide with Him in the simplicity of a child-like faith, hearing His voice and humbly obeying it. Life has indeed, we confess with shame, been full of sin;

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 16.

² 1 Cor. xii. 3.

³ Rev. xxii. 6. *Compare* verse 16, and 1 S. Peter, i. 11.

⁴ Psalm cxix. 130.

and time, as spent by us, has been a squandered treasure; but when, as one of the fruits of our repentance, and as a real mark of our amendment, we set ourselves to search those things which were written aforetime for our learning, the God of all consolation shews us how we—even we—‘through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures—may have hope’¹—the *bright* hope of a peaceful conscience in the end, and the *blessed* hope of everlasting life.

¹ Romans, xv. 4.

SERMON IX.

THE SERVICE OF THE BODY:—LABOUR.

Third Sunday in Advent.

ROMANS, vi. 19.

‘As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.’

IF the *mind* of a Christian is the source of many of his sins—if, in looking back on what is probably the greater part of our life, we are convinced that we have to ‘put off the old man,’ the ‘old evil nature,’ and to ‘put on the new Man,’ becoming really, in heart and conversation, new creatures in Christ Jesus, ‘renewed in the spirit of’ our ‘*mind*,’¹—if the *mind* of one so awakened needs ‘doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness,’—what shall we say of the *body*? The body, surely, has been the willing or unwilling instrument of those past sins; the body is that which has brought us so completely under the

¹ Ephesians, iv. 23.

bondage of that former task-master; they are the deceitful lusts of the body which must be renounced by us as corrupt; it is with our bodies that we must shew that not in vain have we been taught, reproved, corrected; it is by bringing our body into subjection, that we shall prove ourselves to have been diligent scholars in the discipline of our great Master, Christ. If, in the review of life, the mind has to look back upon the wilderness which it made for itself, so barren and desolate through long-continued neglect, when the good land might have become, by diligent care and cultivation, as the very 'garden of the Lord;'—our bodies, without a doubt, have had the greatest share in creating these waste places, in perverting the gifts of God and the powers bestowed by Him into occasions of abuse, in leaving to the watchful sower of tares the field which was intended for the Harvest of the seed of the Kingdom, and in allowing 'briars and thorns,' the pleasures and pollutions of the world, to change these which should have been years of productive growth, into years of miserable unfruitfulness. These Romans, whom S. Paul reminds of their by-gone history; those Corinthians, to whose conscience he appeals as a witness of their past deeds of shame;¹ those Ephesians, whom he stirs up to a better mind by the remembrance of their 'former conversation';²

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

² Eph. ii. 1-3; iv. 17-24; v. 8.

those Colossians, whose footsteps he traces through the paths of early disobedience:¹ all these, my Brethren, are but types and patterns of ourselves. In *their* warnings, *we* are warned. In *their* characters, as laid open to them by the Revealer of Secrets, we see too often the shadow—aye, and the substance—of our own, and are taught to sorrow for those days, never to be recalled, wherein we walked on the broad road, ‘fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.’ It may be that, even now, as we hear or read the words, so descriptive of the way of sinners, God’s loving Voice finds its echo within our hearts—‘Such were some of you.’ It may be, that as we listen to the reproving Spirit, His convincing convicting power enters into our very soul, and shakes our false security by setting before us the things that we have done, and the life which we are spending to-day. ‘Ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity.’ Now, of course, between a sense of past indulgence, and a resolution of future amendment, between the carnal life which makes us ashamed, and the higher life to which God calls us, there intervenes some thought inspired by Him, some word or warning brought home to the soul by the utterance of the preacher, or the message of a great loss, or the actual sentence of Holy Writ itself. Take one such admonition:

¹ Colossians, iii. 5-7.

‘The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord.’¹ That little passage may be the barrier which divides what we *have* been, from what we purpose, by God’s grace, to be; and it is quite possible, that there may be some, even here, who recognize in this the Lord’s solemn address to themselves. Others there are, who have long felt the peril of not keeping their body in temperance, soberness, and chastity—who have turned in horror from the sins which are contrary thereto, because they had learnt at last that by their habits they were grieving the Holy Spirit of God, or had perceived in themselves the beginning of that fearful state wherein men walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, or had fathomed the meaning of that appalling threat: ‘If any man defile the Temple of God,’ (that is, this body,) ‘him shall God destroy.’² And others too there are, who, though mercifully preserved from the grosser and more deadly sins, kept free from drunkenness and impurity, have yet given way to those commoner temptations—sloth, vanity, idleness, softness, an angry tongue, an envious eye—which really form part of ‘the law of sin in our members,’ and may already have over-mastered the higher bent of ‘the inward man.’ These too, like those more darkly stained with evil, do need to have it borne in upon them, that they, in their measure, have made their

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 13.² *Ib.* iii. 17.

body a servant to iniquity, and cannot be counted safe where they are.

For all these, then, in different degrees, the question may be not only useful but necessary: 'How can I make up for lost time, in regard to this *body* of mine, which has been so often the cause of my fall?' *They* only will not care to find an answer to this, who are recklessly living only for the body, and setting their affection deliberately 'on things on the earth,' without any recollection either of what God *has* done *for* them, or of what He *will* do *to* them; who are, in fact, 'without God in the world.'¹ To *them*, the body, if they would only confess it, is everything—the soul, nothing. Turning from these—not in contempt, but with the fear that we ourselves might be, some day, *like* them, if we take no heed—let us see what manner of change can be wrought in us.

To all of us, then, if we are in earnest, the Lord speaks here by His Apostle, bidding us, whatever may have been our shortcomings or our impurities hitherto, *now* at least yield our 'members servants to righteousness unto holiness'—yes, and the *more* we have been enslaved by sin, so much the more to hold fast the better service now. It is surely an encouragement to us, even at the outset, to note the peculiar *form* of this doctrine delivered unto us. Our bodies were servants to iniquity unto

¹ Ephesians, ii. 12.

iniquity—that is, the misery of sin consists not merely in its acts, but in its habit; not merely in its punishment, but in its own *continuance*: lawlessness ends in lawlessness, so that in hell the reprobate will not only be lost, but be utterly sinful; he will not only be separated from God, but will also *hate* God. *How awful!*

Mark the contrast of the course which we *may* still follow: we can yield our ‘members servants to righteousness, unto holiness.’ In other words, those who serve righteousness go from strength to strength: as, for Christ’s sake, and in His Grace, they do the thing that is right, again and again, they are moving towards a state of perfect holiness; they will not only be *happy* in Heaven, but *holy*. Eternal Life is only a *part* of that gladness which consists in ‘righteousness and peace;’¹ righteousness imputed, inwrought, increased; and peace, its effect, its prophetic promise and blessing—‘quietness and assurance for ever.’ We *begin* in the Spirit, Who sanctifies us little by little; and we are brought to completion at last, in that Kingdom which shall have *no* end, in the joy of the Holy Ghost. And whence shall we have His joy, except from His Holiness? Our yearnings to be like God, will be satisfied by our waking up after His likeness; our longing to be really good and pure will be accomplished, because in our measure we shall have shared

¹ Romans, xiv. 17.

His purity and goodness ; and the word of our Lord shall find its fullest meaning : ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be *filled*.’¹

But these ‘exceeding precious promises’ must not make us fancy we can fly away towards Heaven, but should rather teach us how we ought ‘to *walk* and to please God.’² For a cross is laid upon us, or ever we can attain unto our crown ; and before we can reign with Him, God requires of us a *sacrifice* and a *service*. Even the gray-haired servant of sin must be content to labour without wages, in that Household which he chooses at last—that blessed Household in which the children have a glorious liberty, and in which the humblest worker can be ‘the Lord’s freeman’—no longer ‘a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.’³

And in this sacrifice and service, the body (whereof we speak) has its share—yea, all its members can be offered up therein ; to repeat the golden words of S. Chrysostom : ‘Let the eye see no evil, and it becomes a sacrifice ; let the tongue speak nothing corrupt, and it becomes an offering ; let the hand work no misdeed, and it becomes a burnt-offering : nor indeed is this sufficient, but we must also be doing good ; the hand must give alms,

¹ S. Matt. v. 6.

² 1 Thess. iv. 1.

³ Gal. iv. 7.

and the mouth bless them that curse, and the ear be always ready for Divine things; for sacrifice hath nothing of blemish in it—sacrifice implies the first-fruits of all the rest being presented to God.’¹ The past lusts and appetites of our body must be mortified by the graces most contrary to them; our deadness must be exchanged for the zealous life of Christian devotion; our haste in running into temptation, for a passionate desire to work, with all our bodily and mental powers, for God. If Peter, warming himself at the fire, has actually denied his Lord, he must go out into the cold night and weep bitterly. If we have been conquered by anger, we must do some kind act for the person with whom we were angry. ‘Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.’² When gluttony has overcome us, we must overcome *it* by fasting; when strong drink has prevailed against us, we must prevail against it by bestowing the value of it upon the poor, some of whom are perishing while we feast; where slothfulness has been our bane, we must make up for it by doing the humblest task we can find, by a certain time. Has our youth, or even our manhood, been impure? What a joy then, now to be able, by bitter self-denial, to help on the work of a penitentiary, if so

¹ *S. Chrysostom, Hom. xxi. 656, E.*

² *Eph. iv. 28.*

be we may at the least save one lost soul alive, and hide a multitude of sins !¹

To set the eternal good of others above our own present gratification, to keep under our body and bring it into subjection, to eat and drink for the glory of God, so that we may make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, to have ever before us—once, at all events, each day—the awful moment when with our bodies we shall rise again to give account for our own works, and to receive the things done in our body, according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad,—this will be the sanctifying elevating purpose formed in our souls, if we do really and honestly desire to serve God in newness of heart.

Each Person of the Blessed Trinity (and we shall do well to notice this) has an interest in, and invites us to, this surrender of our members to the higher rule of the purifying Gospel. The Father, Who spared not His only-begotten, but freely gave Him up for us all, has added to His marvellous creation of our body, the still more wonderful restoration thereof; and so the Apostle may well beseech us, by these ‘mercies of God,’ to present our ‘bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is’ our ‘reasonable service.’² Then, too, there is the constraining love of the Son, lifting us at once to the allegiance of Heaven, from the selfishness which

¹ St. James, v. 20.

² Rom. xii. 1.

chains us to the earth. 'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price,'¹ even 'with the precious Blood of Christ;'² 'therefore glorify God in your body.' And, once more, there is the awakening, quickening, soul-stirring cry from that Divine indwelling Comforter, the Giver and Preserver of all life, bodily and spiritual—'Know ye not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?'³

Join all these thoughts, these Scripture admonitions, in one; consider *Who* hath made you and re-made you, *Whose* Death hath redeemed you, *Whose* Presence is within you at this moment; and then strive, by the help of God, to walk more worthily of this high calling, these unspeakable gifts and privileges; strive to move ever under the protecting enlightening sense of that 'Grace of God which bringeth salvation,' and which has been teaching you, these many days and years, 'that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,' you 'should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.'⁴ Strive to shew forth the power of the Cross in mortifying your members which are upon the earth, 'always bearing about in the body the Dying of the Lord Jesus, that the Life also of Jesus might be made manifest in' your 'body.'⁵ Strive to consecrate yourself afresh each day to

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20.² 1 S. Peter, i. 19.³ 1 Cor. vi. 19.⁴ *Titus*, ii. 11, 12.⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 10.

the Eternal Spirit, as a sanctuary that sounds from morning, and in which no deed or word of defilement can abide, remembering that 'the Temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.'¹ So shall you rise, even below, to higher things, and be enabled to 'abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;'² to cast away, with whatever present pain, the cords which bind you to the pleasures of sin, and to lift this weak flesh of yours, together with that more willing spirit, into the Kingdom of the sufferings of Christ, there to wait, with Him Whose crucified Form is already on the Throne of His Glory, 'for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of' *your* 'body.'³

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 17.

² 1 S. Peter, ii. 11.

³ Rom. viii. 23.

SERMON X.

THE DEVOTION OF THE SPIRIT:—PRAYER.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

LAMENTATIONS, lii. 40, 41.

'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the Heavens.'

THE aim of life, when God has brought us out of the desert which we had made for ourselves, should be, that our 'whole spirit and soul and body' may be so purified, so invigorated, so enlightened, as to 'be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'¹ As *each* element of this marvellous nature of ours has, through the Fall, had its share in severing us from God, so, since the still more marvellous Redemption wrought in Jesus, and by virtue of the all-pervading, all-cleansing, all-restoring grace of His Precious Blood, should each do its proper work in bringing us on along the homeward way, for the perfect Redemption in Heaven.

¹ 1 Thessalonians, v. 23.

If *sacred study* is the healing medicine wherewith to 'minister to a *mind* diseased,' and if, in *active labours* under the Cross, we have a remedy for the rebellion of our *body*, we must remember what should accompany both these—the prayer of the spirit, alike its deliverance from the miserable state of being 'without God in the world,' and the stretching forth of itself to Him in that 'newness of life,' whereof *all* the 'fresh springs,' *all* the purposes, *all* the desires, *all* acts and words and thoughts, must be in God. The rule of an awakened Christian must include all that he is, this as well as those, the gradual sanctification of the higher no less than the lower affections, habits, powers; that so the holy motive on the one hand, and the Divine Presence on the other, may leaven everything. And so, while the reasoning soul does *its* duty, and the industrious members render *their* service, the indwelling spirit too has a sacrifice of its own to offer, together with and for the acceptance of that bounden duty and service which thus become well-pleasing to our Lord. All three must rebuild for God the ruined Temple which was fallen down. All three must cultivate for Him that which has been too long 'the field of the slothful, grown over with thorns,' and yielding no 'fruit unto holiness.' All three are workers together with God—appointed by Him to undo that which ought never to have been done, and to do those things

which, years ago, they *ought* to have done. All three are aids to each other, according as He hath tempered them together, for the great work of Jesus Christ, if so be that it can yet be finished. We are to be His servants thoroughly—dedicated to Him in the exercise of the mind, the occupation of the body, the devotion of the spirit. We are to pray as well as to labour, to read but also to pray, to go forth with prayer, whether it be to our study or to our work. How shall we understand what we read, unless, in our longing for guidance, we beseech God to open our eyes that we may see the wondrous things of His Law? How shall the daily toil of our hands be other than lost labour, except we ask His Blessing on *whatsoever* we do? How can our *darkened* sight be illuminated, our sinful bodies be accepted of Him, until, in the Name of Him Who is our Light and our Redeemer, we desire the merciful favour of God? Prayer opens the sealed Book, and refreshes the weary limbs; and then, in their turn, the body and the mind arise to help the highest part of man in rendering its own due homage to that Holy One, from Whom, in negligent years, it had so deeply revolted!

But, regarded even by itself, prayer is (we may affirm) most necessary for anyone who would, in the true sense of the word, return to God, atoning for the past. For it represents *both* sides of his regenerate nature: the craving which he feels for

the pardon of long-continued neglect ; and the passionate earnestness, inspired into him, for real communion with God. Where life has been mispent, the pain of looking back consists not only in the actual sins committed, or the evil habits acquired, but also in the dreadful blank presented to us—the space which *should* have been taken up by monthly, and weekly, and daily religious duties, but which, as conscience tells us, has been scarcely occupied at all. Memory, almost unbidden, reminds us of such lost opportunities, granted to us by our God, whereby to seek and find Him; and they may well seem to us like

‘Ears of wheat,
Sown once for good, but trodden into clay;
Or golden coins, squandered and still to pay.’¹

And so, to redeem this treasure, and even now, if so be, to make some gain with it for the King who lent it to us, to bring forth yet, out of the boundless productiveness of those seeds of God, some slight return for ‘the Lord of the Harvest’ already very near, we act upon the prophet’s exhortation. First, we ‘search and try our ways;’ and then, as we ‘turn again to the Lord,’ we ‘lift up our *heart* with our hands unto God in the Heavens.’ For we come to Him now, not merely as all His rational creatures should, kneeling before the Lord their *Maker*—not merely because He is our Father, able and willing

¹ Rossetti, ‘Lost Days.’

to 'give good things to them that ask Him,'¹—not merely because in our blindness we need *His* guidance, Who is ready to shew us how we can please Him; but also and very specially, as His *new* Creation, approaching Him in *thankfulness* for that He has delivered our souls from the nethermost hell—in *confidence*, since He is 'plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon Him faithfully,'—in the *loving belief* of those who can find, through Jesus, a refuge yet from the terrors of a future judgment-seat in the comfort of a present throne of grace. It is this comfort now open to us, which should decide our choice in the matter of prayer. For with this and with all other duties which can still be done, my Lord's inquiry of me is, not simply 'What hast thou been?' but 'What art thou *now*?' As in the last great account which He will take with His servants, He will (we may be assured) not necessarily reckon up the old debts of a wasted youth, if He has seen in us the fruitful shame of a true repentance, and the patient fellowship of the sufferings of Christ; so in this day of our probation—though it be even the eleventh hour—He passes on from the solemn question, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?' to the bracing startling call, 'Go work *to-day*.'² To-day, if ye will hear His Voice, be labourers for Him—to-day, be found, if never before, praying to Him—to-day, though it be the

¹ *S. Matt.* vii. 11.² *S. Matt.* xxi. 28.

very last allowed you, open your hearts for the grace of His Word, for the consolation of His answer, for the might of His Presence. The storms of life, the madness of the wicked, the waves of an overwhelming temptation, are round about you. You are beginning to sink. Is the ship to go down, while you slumber on, in your dreams of pleasure and business, with neither heart nor time for prayer? Mightier than the storms, mightier than the waves, mightier than the spell which has bound you so very long in the cares and enjoyments of life, mightier than the chains which hold you to the sides of the prison-house, is the Lord which dwelleth on high, and His cry which reaches you below: 'What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God.'¹

Yes, Brethren, and none the less truly—though, as you rightly remind the preacher, this is the cry, not of God in anger, but of a companion in alarm—none the less truly may we hear therein His message of mercy, His awakening summons to ourselves. Even in the feeble utterance of men distressed by our indifference, even in the dull repetitions of a little-regarded minister, intreating us no longer to live without prayer; even in those sermons, which, again and again in this fast-fading year, have tried to rouse us to this needful duty, we may trace, as we shall own we *might* have traced, hereafter, the appeal

¹ Jonah, i. 6.

of Him Who speaks to us by human instruments and by secondary meanings, and not only by the pleadings of His Spirit, and the direct warnings of His Word. It may be, that some of *you* are called this very day, to a new estimate of the value and blessing of prayer, and of the exceeding peril of letting it give place to anything else whatsoever. It may be, that one soul may be led, through the penitent recollection of that Home towards which he has not opened his windows so long, to arise and go unto his Father, with the deep contrition which only a son can feel, seeking in true humility the place and hire of a servant, though owning himself all the while, because of these past years, unworthy alike of wages, and of that gift which yet he seeks through Jesus Christ our Lord. What say *you* concerning this, in the retrospect and the resolutions of life, in the remembrance of what you have thrown away, and in the purposes which you are forming for to-morrow?

I. Have you lost anything? Let us think a little. Twenty, or thirty, or forty years have passed away. During that time one or two great troubles have fallen upon you. In those seasons of affliction, *if ever*, you knew what it was to pray. What was it? Nothing less than the pouring out of your heart to God, in Whom alone you could find any hope or consolation. In those seasons too, *if ever*, you learnt what it was for your complaint to

enter into His Ears, what it was to be heard in Heaven His Dwelling-place, and to receive in answer from Him, first patience, and then comfort. What that comfort has been to you, once or twice, *might* have been yours all through these bygone years. What that patience helped you, in those particular trials, to bear, might have been borne throughout life's varied difficulties and sorrows, had you acted on the counsel of Holy Writ, to 'pray without ceasing.'¹ Not a loss that has befallen you, not a disappointment that has checked your prosperity, not a sickness that has broken into your even course, but might have been blest to you in divers ways, had you besought the Lord for that peace of His which passeth all understanding, and which the world *cannot* give. You can remember no distress which might not have been lightened by prayer—no sin which it might not have enabled you to overcome—no hardness which it would not have nerved you to endure. Is there any *grace* in which you feel yourself specially wanting? Persevering prayer would have obtained it for you. Is there any Article of the Faith which you hold but feebly? Constant prayer would have *increased* that faith. Is there any portion of Heavenly wisdom which you are lacking? Had you asked 'of God, Who giveth to all men liberally,'² *this* would have been given you. Your food has not nourished you, your work

¹ 1 Thess. v. 17.² S. James, i. 5.

has often failed you, your children have been a cause of grief to you, your illness has only added to your ill-temper, your home troubles have become worse and worse, your temptations have grown greater instead of less, your sins have taken a closer hold upon you, you take less pleasure than you did in the services of the Church or the reading of the Scriptures. And why? Because you have not made prayer the one necessity of your daily life—the one duty which was at all hazards to be maintained amid all changes and chances. Because you have not obeyed the Apostolic exhortation—‘*in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to let your requests be made known unto God.*’¹ O what evils have followed in the train of this neglect! days without Divine Guidance—nights without angels to defend us²—hours of tribulation, with no refreshing from the Lord—times of false merriment, when we could not be rejoicing *in Him*—years of gradual hardening ‘through the deceitfulness of sin’³—the race not run, the good fight scarcely begun, the work of God not yet undertaken in earnest, though ‘the Judge standeth before the door!’⁴ Is *all* lost? It may be, unless

¹ Philippians, iv. 6.

² A little child’s alarmed thought about his sister. ‘Thou best philosopher,’ is not the bitter experience of men and women, as they look back upon the defilements of youth, too often a comment upon this?

³ Heb. iii. 13.

⁴ S. James, v. 9.

we give ourselves instantly to prayer, asking Him at least, through the operation of the Blessed Spirit, to '*teach us to pray.*'¹

II. But can you *gain* anything now? We will look into *this* also. It is our Lord's own Promise: 'All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.'² The stream of love and grace, pent up so long by the closing of our mouths and hearts, is ready, as we open the barriers, to meet the struggling breath of our souls, and inspire us with power from on high. All things whereof we make mention in our prayers, will become occasions of blessing: the sorrow which we express for our falls, will bring down God's restoring pardoning grace; the care which we cast on God, will no longer be a burden; the void in our saddened wounded hearts will be filled by *His* unfailing comfort, Who has promised us, by His Son, to 'give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him';³ the new work which we commend to God, will prosper in His Hand; the faith which we own as far too weak, *must* grow under *His* touch Who is not only the Author, but also the Finisher of our Faith;⁴ the death, even the sudden death from which we ask Him to deliver us, will lose for us its terrors, for He will promise to be there amid the shadows;⁵ the thorn in the flesh—the pain or

¹ S. Luke, xi. 1.

² S. Matt. xxi. 22.

³ S. Luke, xi. 13.

⁴ Heb. xii. 2.

⁵ Psalm xxiii. 4.

infirmity of our body, for which we beseech Him that it may depart from us—will prove to us, just *because* we thus pray, the welcome minister of our strengthening Christ;¹ the judgment, which we remember daily in our devotions with the fear and trembling of Christian penitents, will draw nigh to us as a friend, long looked for, to be received with holy boldness and rejoicing;² and *before* that, and as we wait for it, each day will have its Divine aids to faith and holiness, each night its heavenly guardianship, each prolonged fight with the besetting sin its victory, each bestowal of grace its increase in us, each cross its own memorial of Him with Whom we suffer, its own assurance that in due season we shall be also glorified together.

Great advantage then, every way, hath he of whom it shall be said, in the evening and the morning and at noon-day,³ ‘Behold, he prayeth.’⁴ Compare the life which, through the defrauding influence of the devil, has been yours, with that which Christ’s quickening grace might make the rest of your life to be—and take your choice for eternity.

III. Yet once more: set aside both your actual losses and your promised gains, and think only of the ‘strange work’ of the Son of God, and of the things which He hath done for your soul. Think

¹ 2 Cor. xli. 7-9.

² 1 S. John, iv. 17.

³ Psalm lv. 17.

⁴ Acts, ix. 11.

of His leaving Heaven, where, with the Father and the Spirit, He heard and answered men of old, to pray for us on earth—to shew us, by His own faithful Example, that an earnest life *must* be a life of prayer, that its very agonies are to make us pray ‘*more earnestly*,’¹ that its end, even amid excruciating torments, may be a commendation of the soul to God; and then at last so to die for us, that throughout the ages we might plead His Death as our door of entrance to the Father of mercies—His Resurrection as the assurance that we might enter with Him in spirit even on earth into the gates of Jerusalem, which are never shut to the redeemed—His constant Intercession as our means of acceptance with the Holy One, His pledge to us, that whatsoever we should ask the Father in His Name He would give us.² Study the Life and Death of Jesus Christ; consider Him as He was and as He is—‘the Same yesterday and to-day and for ever,’ yet once made ‘perfect through sufferings,’³ and taught, in the bitter woe of His Manhood, to offer up ‘supplication with strong crying and tears,’⁴—acquainted personally with your grief, yet hearing you in heavenly places—your Brother, who spake and sighed and hungered and wept and fasted, and through all these communed with your God, yet also your Lord, Who can present *your* sighs and

¹ S. Luke, xxii. 44.² S. John, xvi. 23.³ Heb. ii. 10.⁴ Ib. v. 7.

tears, *your* thirst for righteousness, *your* desire for peace, to the Father with Whom He is One. And then, as you thus look unto Him, you will no longer hesitate, and delay, and make excuses, and forget, but under His Cross and Throne you will kneel and pray.

‘O Thou that hearest the prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come!’¹—even we, Thy most unworthy servants, who so long have stood apart from Thee. In that Presence, Brethren, and only there, shall we be safe. He, O my friend, has been waiting, not for others merely, but for *thee*. He, as thou seekest His Face, ‘will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee.’² So, even if we ‘have erred in spirit’ before, we shall at last, through this intercourse with Heaven, ‘come to understanding;’ though we have ‘murmured’ in speaking *against* God, we shall then, by speaking *to* Him, ‘learn doctrine,’³ for ‘He will teach us of His ways, and we shall walk in His paths;’⁴ though prayer has been so long neglected by us, the Lord, Who has been watching for us all the while, will incline His Ears unto our tardy supplication, and ponder the voice of our humble desires. So, little by little, shall the duty which we have learnt, though late, cease to be a burden and a task, and become to us a daily and hourly

¹ Psalm lxxv. 2.² Isaiah, xxx. 19.³ Isaiah, xxix. 24.⁴ *Jb.* ii. 3.

blessing. For in it we shall find the Lord God's strength in the morning, that we may know the way wherein we should walk—a real mysterious refreshment in the pause of the noon-day, as we go apart or stand still to commune with God—our consolation at the eventide, when, in the yearning for pardon, our soul gaspeth unto God as a thirsty land—a stay amid the temptations of the world, the snares of Satan, and the failings of our flesh—and a peaceful and sure rest in the hour of death. For indeed the *life* of prayer, spent in working for God and in waiting patiently upon Him, shall close, whatever be the darkness now, in that faithful loving call 'out of the deep,' which is heard with joy on high—'Lord Jesus! receive my spirit.'¹

¹ Acts, vii. 59.

SERMON XI.¹

DILIGENCE.

Sexagesima.

2 S. PETER, i. 5.

'Giving all diligence.'

THROUGH the knowledge of Jesus Christ, revealed to us from Heaven, we are called to glory and virtue. Through the power of Him Who delivers us from the corruption that is in the world through lust, we have all things granted to us that pertain unto life and godliness. Great and precious promises are given to the soul, that by these it may be a partaker of the Divine Nature.² His awful light shines on the past path of sin, that so the wanderer may come forth out of the darkness, and start afresh, as a pilgrim, on the

¹ A great sorrow was given to the writer soon after the delivery of the preceding sermon, and the course was for a while interrupted. Consequently, the later sermons will be found to have special connection with the seasons of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter, though carrying on the general subject.

² 2 S. Peter, i. 3, 4.

narrow way which leads to God. Faith opens out new visions to the awakened spirit, fills it with new hopes, stirs its inner depths with new currents of thought, rouses it with the profound might of new resolutions, keeps before its eyes a new and glorious aim—raises up, as the standard for its vigorous fighting in the Battle of the Lord, the quickening motive of the eternal word, ‘Fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.’¹ But then, of course, Faith—itself God’s gift—while it offers us all these blessings, lays upon us a vast responsibility as well. Our Lord’s bestowal must be followed by zeal on our part, that so our zeal may be followed by entrance into His Kingdom of joy. When the Holy Ghost has disclosed to us our sins, and we have humbly and heartily confessed them, the measure of our after-earnestness will be the real test and proof of our sincerity. ‘Behold! this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what *carefulness* it wrought in you!’² When pardon has been pronounced over us, we must *abound* in the work of Jesus Christ; otherwise, shall we not have ‘forgotten that’ we were ‘purged from’ our ‘old sins’?³ How else shall it be known and shewn that ours is a living, saving, sanctifying faith at all, unless, in the humiliating recollection of days gone by, and the longing expectation of our

¹ Rom. vi. 22.² 2 Cor. vii. 11.³ 2 S. Peter, i. 9.

Redeemer's return, we 'add to' our 'faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity'? It is for this, O my friends, that *we* are to be 'giving all diligence;' it is for this, as we have seen, that we are to employ all our energies and talents—all the vigour and life of body, soul, and spirit—all the Divine strength of study, labour, and prayer.

There is no time to be lost, we have lost too much already; we can only just redeem the time *now*. Are we ready to respond to the present call of God? Let us ask ourselves some questions.

I. The day, for many of us, begins with a struggle; it is the old old temptation, which the Wise Man noted from his experience: 'Yet a *little* sleep, a *little* slumber, a *little* folding of the hands to sleep.'¹ What practical answer do we give to that? Do we meet it and conquer it with energetic activity, with instant self-denial, with the Psalmist's holy purpose—'Awake up, my glory;' (O tongue of mine! the best member that I have;) 'awake, lute and harp:' (all the powers which were given me for praising God:) 'I myself will awake right early.'² I pray you, smile not at the inquiry. There is one thought which is enough to make

¹ Prov. vi. 10.

² Psalm lvii. 9.

us serious about it at once. Early rising (as you know, perhaps, quite well already) is a habit very observable in Holy Scripture. Before the sun is risen upon the earth, *Lot* has escaped from Sodom, and is entering the city of refuge; even as we must make haste to flee from pollution. Early in the morning, *Abraham* sets out on the journey which is to close with the sacrifice of his son; a pattern to those who hereafter might be tempted to delay their self-denying obedience. Early in the morning, *Jacob* takes the stone of his pillow, and makes it the pillar of Beth-El—the House of God; the place of sleep becoming, as with the kneeling Christian, the place of prayer. Early in the morning, the Lord sends *Moses* to stand before Pharaoh; for painful duty must be done at once. Early in the morning, *Moses* builds an altar under the Hill before God: for devotion should be offered as the day's first-fruits. Early in the morning, he goes up into that Glorious Presence with the two tables of stone; for God wakeneth our ear to hear His Will before other sounds have entered. Early in the morning, *Joshua* brings the people to the Jordan, which they are to pass. Early in the morning, he begins the circuit of devoted Jericho. Early in the morning, he examines the troubler of Israel. Early in the morning, he besieges Ai. Early in the morning, *Elkanah* and *Hannah* his wife worship before the Lord, ere their homeward journey. *Gideon* asks

God for a sign of deliverance ; and 'early on the morrow' he rises up, to find that the sign has been given indeed. Early he and the Israelites go forth for the battle with the Midianites. *Samuel* cries to the Lord all night, in his sorrow for Saul's rejection, and then faithfully and fearlessly rises up early to meet the reprobate king. Early in the morning, *David* sallies out at his father's command. Early in the morning, *Elisha* prays for his servant, and both together they behold the Lord's 'horses and chariots of fire round about' them for their rescue from the hosts of men. In the very 'twilight,' before 'the morning light,' the good tidings of Israel's salvation reach Samaria. Rising early in the morning, to keep guard against the army of the Assyrians, as we must do against our spiritual foes, the men of *Hezekiah* knew that their lord's supplication had been heard ; for the 'hundred and four-score and five thousand'—apt emblem of those evil angels whose 'name is legion'—'were all dead corpses.' When the street was to be built again, and the wall, even in the 'troublous times' of *Nehemiah*—the holy city needing, like the ruined Temple of our body, thorough restoration—the children of the Captivity wrought with one hand in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon—earnest labour and vigilant prayer going together—'from the rising of the morning.' When the covenant was to be renewed between them and

their God, even as *we* must plead afresh each day the Better Covenant in Jesus Christ, 'the Book of the Law of God' was read to them from the time of the morning light—*His* Book, Whose joy is our strength as we search those Scriptures before going forth to our daily duties. In the anxious care of his sons and daughters—like that which should bring us betimes on our knees before God, to make intercession for our beloved—*Job* 'rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all.' Early in the morning, *Daniel's* voice ascended from the lion's den to encourage the conscience-stricken king, who had come at that opening hour, as we might do, to seek in haste the peace of him whom he had wronged. With his soul did *Isaiah* desire God in the night, and with his spirit within him did he seek Him early. And was it not thus with *all* God's servants *the prophets*, rising up early *with* their Almighty Lord, and speaking in His Name? Yes! and He Whose Spirit was in them, the Eternal Word put forth in these last times to dwell among us—*He* shews us, by His own example, that the first part of the day is its *best* part—the best for work, the best for prayer, the best for thought. 'In the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed;' and this, though at sunset the evening before He had been healing 'many

that were sick of divers diseases.’¹ ‘Early in the morning He came into the Temple, and taught the people.’² Nay! before the great and solemn work of His first ordination, He ‘continued all night in prayer to God; and *when it was day*, He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve.’³ In the *fourth* watch of the night, the morning watch, after another mountain-meditation, He is seen ‘walking on the sea.’ All night the disciples toil at their fishing, in vain; but when the morning is come, Jesus is seen standing on the shore. He starts early for Sychar; for, arriving there at mid-day, He sits down *wearied* with His journey. Then, at last, the labours and sufferings of life’s *whole* journey are over, and He lays Him down to rest in the garden-grave; and lo! very early in the morning, as it begins to dawn, He rises up for the last time, to sleep no more, nor to die.

Look, I pray you, upon all these, my friends. Lot, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Hannah, Gideon, Samuel, David, Elisha, Hezekiah, Nehemiah, Daniel, Job, Isaiah, the prophets! Why, these are the very saints of God—some of the choice ones of His chosen, ‘set before us in the way, lest we should faint or stray;’ and with them, and above them all, our Best Brother and our Highest Lord, Christ Jesus, leaving us an example

¹ S. Mark, i. 32, 35.

² S. John, viii. 2.

³ S. Luke, vi. 12, 13.

that we should follow His steps—the blessed Pattern of self-sacrifice in all things—giving up rest and time, strength and sleep, in order to do His Father's Will, and to finish His Work. Well might the remembrance of such a Life, the study of those many lights which He had kindled of old, and of His own bright diligence, bring disciples together at the third hour of the day for the Pentecostal outpouring; and Apostles 'early in the morning, to speak in the Temple the words of this life;'¹ and Christians in all ages, at the sun-rising, to glorify God by the vigorous labour or hearty worship, for which that early freshness braces us.

And *yet* I seem to hear a murmuring from some of you, as if you would remind the preacher that this rising up betimes, whereof he discourses, is already far more your own experience than his, and that he is hours and days and weeks behind you already in the race of time and toil. Most true, my Brethren! And still, for all that, it is safe for you and for himself that he should admonish you of the duty, and of that secret spring of it, without which we cannot dare to hope for the blessing. If we have not that higher purpose of serving God better through serving Him *sooner* each day, it is indeed 'but lost labour that we haste to rise up early.' Are we as ready to unfold our

¹ Acts, v. 21.

hands, in order to lift them up to Heaven, as we are to let them down for the work of the earth? Are our eyes as quick to open 'to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord and to visit His Temple,' as to look upon yesterday's half-finished task, which will bring us, when completed, our present reward? Are our feet as swift to seek this House of God on His Holy Day at the early Communion, as they are on 'the six working days'¹ to traverse the roads and fields of the country, the streets and lanes of the city, for the post allotted to us in this world which is passing away? Am I, on the week-day, too busy to refresh my spirit first with prayer? and, on the Lord's Day, too fond of rest for my body to be busy about my soul? O surely, though 'in zeal not remiss' about our earthly matters, we are also to be 'fervent in spirit,' as 'serving the Lord.'² Though temporal life has its calls upon my industry and quickness, I must not forget *that* life eternal, which demands at my hands and in my heart the mightful exercise of all the powers that I have. 'I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me;' . . . I will get me 'up early to the VINEYARDS.'³

II. But, though the proverb fully known in the world holds good of the Christian, that 'well begun is half done,' and though especially those who plead

¹ Ezekiel, xlv. 1.

² Romans, xii. 11.

³ Canticles, vii. 10, 12.

God's mercy in the morning, shall surely find Him as their Defence and Refuge throughout the troublous day; yet we must remember that all our time is in God's Hand, and that all of it should therefore be dedicated to Him. Not, of course, that we are to be always on our knees, always studying, always engaged in meditation, never seeking recreation, never unbending our mind, never enjoying ourselves in that bodily exercise which doth after all profit a *little*.¹ Verily, this would be the life of angels, not of our poor flesh and blood—the rest of Heaven, not the work of earth. Nay! we cannot even be, most of us, like the holy Anna, ‘who departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.’² Further yet; we cannot be labouring with our hands or our head the whole day long—our human nature would not bear the strain; we *must* have refreshment, just as we must have food and sleep. But what we are to watch against is *idleness*; and recollect, Brethren, that ‘a man may be very *idly busy*, and take great pains to so little purpose, that in his labours and expense of time he shall serve no end but of folly and vanity—busy, as Domitian was, in catching flies.’³ And, on the other hand, a man may become idle under the pretence of religion, using the resting days and

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 8.² S. Luke, ii. 37.³ Jeremy Taylor, ‘*Holy Living*,’ i. 1.

Festivals of the Church as if they were *no* days at all; whereas, in truth, (as Jeremy Taylor warns us,) 'it is better to *plough* upon holy-days, than to do nothing, or to do viciously.' And putting these things together, we learn that we are always to be *occupied*, setting store by all our time, whether it be for our toil or for our relaxation. 'For it is very remarkable, that God, Which giveth so plenteously and with such variety in most matters, seems, in the distribution of our *Time*, to be strait-handed, and gives it to us, not as Nature gives us rivers, enough to drown us, but drop by drop, minute after minute; so that we can never have two minutes together, but He takes away one when He gives us another.' And 'this should teach us to *value* our Time, since *God* so values it, and by His so small distribution of it tells us it is the most precious thing we have.'¹ And so, you see, we are not only to be careful about all the larger portions of our time—the *hours* of business or of reading—but also about the intervals or void spaces of the day; all these are to be *employed*: we ought, as someone says, to be 'packing minutes,'—filling them with little useful exercises; if we are men of much occupation, with short prayers; if engrossed in books, with social talk or bodily exertion; if tired by manual labour, with some bright healthful reading. Thus there will be no portion for the

¹ Jeremy Taylor, '*Holy Dying*,' ii. 1.

devil to make his own—no room for ‘idle words’ or unprofitable waste, which we should have to ‘give account’ of ‘at the Day of Judgment.’¹ Is it not from these very things that we wish to be set free? Is it not for such loss as this that we would make up now while we can? O my soul! wouldest thou not redeem thy misspent *moments* past? Yes, assuredly; and *therefore*, while I am waiting in the church for the opening of the service, I will read a few verses to myself; *therefore*, while I am walking to my work, I will speak to myself in a psalm or a hymn or a spiritual song; when unable to sleep, I will repeat one of the glorious Creeds; when my friends are behind time, some familiar volume shall keep me company; when my second engagement, my second task, is not close upon the first, the interval shall be spent in some deed of mercy; if part of the day hangs heavy on my hands, why should I not learn something *new*? Though the journey be long, and little fruit by the way, at least let me be *moving*:

‘The sure traveller,
Though he alight sometimes, still *goeth on*.’²

III. And, as we are to be ever occupied, so should we give our *mind* and *strength* to all we undertake. No idleness, all earnestness, must be

¹ S. Matt. xii. 36.

² George Herbert, ‘*The Church Porch*.’

the penitent's rule. When God has washed us from our sins, our whole self belongs to Him, and every part of it, and the best powers of each part; and when He summons us to the great Christian race, He expects us to quit ourselves like men and to be strong. His work is not to be taken up in a light half-hearted way; nor is life worthy of the name, which, while the body is sound, wastes away without steady application and conscientious thoroughness. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy *might*.'¹ Is not this, though in the binding language of Holy Writ, the old Latin saying, which has stirred some of us since boyhood—'*Hoc age*'? *Do this*. Go on with this—master this—let nothing hinder you from finishing this—give yourself up to it—work at it as your present duty—spare no pains—give all diligence. O my friends! how often are we, who have so much higher motives for this unwavering perseverance, and so much grace, unknown before, for holding it fast—how often are we put to shame by the vigour shewn by those to whom present success is everything! Still, as in former days, 'the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light';² they keep their aim before them, toil for it early and late, cling to it whatever happens, allow no obstacles to stand in the way, go through fire and water to reach that end. How

¹ *Eccles. ix. 10.*² *S. Luke, xvi. 8.*

different from *our* course! how little zeal we shew! how soon we forget the object before us! what trifles turn us from it! how very easily we are discouraged! ‘ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;’¹ always beginning, and beginning again, yet never ending; always resolving, yet carrying no resolution through—wishing much, attempting little, performing almost nothing: is not this, with many of us, the humiliating confession? But then, the confession of our weakness should issue in the exercise of God’s strength—and in the power of *His* might we should grapple once more with whatever is difficult and toilsome. So, little by little, we shall be trained to do *one* thing well, and then another—and so at last to ‘do all things through Christ, Which strengtheneth’² us. Then we set ourselves patiently to learn some irksome lesson, and lo! the hardship vanishes away—or to acquire, with complete accuracy, the principles of a trade proposed to us; and in a little while men feel that we know our business, and are to be trusted thoroughly—or to be, in some way or other, Church helpers, ringers, teachers in the school, members of the choir, collectors for Christian missions, district-visitors: and we let nothing—no bad weather, no worldly pleasures, no business cares, no love of ease—hinder us from fulfilling our promise, and that which our promise made

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 7.² Phil. iv. 13.

our duty. Yes, Brethren! we strive at length—whatever we do, to ‘do it *heartily*.’

IV. And why? Because, once more, we do it ‘as to the Lord and not to men.’¹ This is in very deed the great aid to the thorough diligence which is required of us—the chief support and encouragement to make us thankful in success, or in failure humble. ‘Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.’² In Him, in reliance on Him, in membership with Him, all our works are to be done; and so, as His members, relying on His merits and His grace, abiding in Him, we go forth and do. We fail, but it is only to strive more earnestly, to cling more closely to Him, to plead more trustfully His Holy Brotherhood, to labour according to His working which worketh in us mightily. We succeed, but we are taught of Him not to put our trust in anything that *we do*—we are disciplined, by the knowledge that in Him alone we are accepted, gratefully to refer our welfare to Him, desiring that all our deeds may be sprinkled with His Blood,³ all our painful labours sanctified by

¹ Col. iii. 23.

² *Ib.* 17.

³ When George Herbert was on his death-bed, a friend went to comfort him with the remembrance of a certain church-restoration effected by him, as of an especial good work. His answer was, ‘It is a good work, if it be sprinkled with the Blood of Christ.’ Otherwise than in this respect, (says Nicholas Ferrar,) he could find nothing to glory or comfort himself with, *either in this or any other thing.*

His Cross, all our works begun, continued, ended in Him—so that we may glorify His Holy Name. Then we are industrious in order to please Him—actively charitable so as to become like Him—sober, temperate, chaste, that all our members may be ever His—instant in prayer, giving eager attendance to reading, weighing well each doctrine delivered to us, because of its relation to Him—measuring our words as heard by Him—watchful over our deeds, as His Communicants should be—‘bringing into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ.’¹ Thus growing in the love of Him Who so greatly loved us; realizing more and more the awfulness of His Presence within us, and of our mysterious fellowship with Him; resting, in the increase of faith, on Him, as the atonement for our imperfections and the propitiation for our sins—we strive to ‘cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,’ and to perfect ‘holiness in the fear of God.’² The careless life of former days becomes hateful to us, because we have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the New Man. Created afresh in Christ Jesus unto good works, we press onwards for that closer walk with Him and in Him—purifying ourselves as He is pure, because we desire to be in some faint measure like Him in that Day when we shall

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5.² *Ib.* vii. 1.

see Him as He is, and know that He is indeed the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, the everlasting Portion of His faithful servants, the never-dying Life of all who lived and died for Him.

SERMON XII.

DOING GOOD.

Quinquagesima.

GALATIANS, vi. 10.

'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men.'

THE days that are no more are sad to us, partly because of the losses which God in His perfect Wisdom has suffered to come to us, partly on account of those which in our sin and folly we have brought upon ourselves. As to the first, no deed of ours can effect a restoration; the blank cannot be filled in life; there is no Orpheus on earth to recover for us by his enchanting music those who have entered the dark valley; it is the future not the present 'Voice of the Son of God,' which shall call the departed to our side once more in Him. But as to the others, though for these too we require the redeeming power of our Father, there is yet a work to be accomplished by *us*. Our bereavements cannot be undone. In secret places we may weep for them, wrestle with God in the agony of being

taught by them His Will, ask for strength to bear them, and for grace to be the better for them—though thoroughly knowing all the while, that neither our lamentations nor our prayers about our dear lost friends can bring them back again. But on the other hand, our neglect of past opportunities, as it concerns others yet living in the flesh, can still be made up for; and even for those who are gone we can shew that ours is a sincerely ‘godly sorrow,’ by henceforth doing good unto all men, *while we have time.*

Terrible indeed it is to look back upon those evil days, in which we bare no burdens for the brethren, healed no wounds, visited none that were sick in body or miserable in soul, dealt none of *our* bread to the hungry, only that which did cost us nothing, clothed him not with the price of apparel taken from our vain and frivolous expenditure—those days of selfishness, wherein we cared for no pleasure but our own, trampled on the wishes of others, despised them, spite of all fair words, in our heart, grudged them any advance, any success, any enjoyment, not given to ourselves—those unchristian days, which were spent in the false religion of those who say ‘that they love God Whom they have not seen,’ while not loving their brother whom they have seen—those godless days, which testify to our at last awakened conscience, of a life of ‘bitterness and *wrath*, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking,’

and much 'malice,' when we robbed ourselves of the delight of being 'kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another,'¹ even as God in Christ (so ran the Creed of our lips) had forgiven us.

Some of you, my friends, have already 'put off all these,' though we the rest are still hindered by them, and are either wilfully continuing therein, or at least striving very imperfectly to be free from their bonds and chains. But whether our victory in Jesus be of many years or only of yesterday—whether the failures we grieve for are those but just recorded of us in God's Book, or those long written against us among the sins and offences of our youth—we all have, at one time or other, made little or no use of that grace of charity, which is above all things to be put on by those 'who name the Name of Christ,' and which is the first of the fruits of His Spirit, and without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God. Surely, as the old familiar words of that Psalm of love² are read to us again and again, as in the Epistle to-day, our hearts are stirred by a two-fold inspiration, breathing in the verses still, with as mighty a presence as ever of the Holy Ghost Who spake thereby—first the painful conviction of our own past shortcomings, as compared with every feature of that Divine picture, and then the earnest desire to grow in some degree

¹ Eph. iv. 31, 32.

² 1 Cor. xiii.

more like it, so exercising ourselves in the little things of daily life, as that we may in the end attain to the measure of Christ's own example. Therein alone we can learn the excellence and the perfection of this blessed grace,—this grace which reflects the Image of Jesus as He really was and is,—this charity, which 'suffereth long, and is kind;' which 'envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up;' which 'doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;' which 'rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;' which 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'

'I look back and my life is very different,' says the hearer of that word—'jealousy, pride, impatience towards others—a choice of the chief place, and of personal pleasure, and of present triumph—a heart soon angry, soon provoked, soon weary and hopeless about those around me—an inclination, too often indulged, to think the worst as to neighbours, and to resent everything said or done by them, as if it were an insult to myself.'

But the backward glance must never be the last. God's Finger points to the time which is yet our own, and His voice calls us to such a thorough fellowship with our Lord, as may root out by degrees this selfishness of our nature. Without this gift, this abiding spirit, we have no assurance *of our acceptance* with God, or our vital union

with His Son; with it, we can have joy and peace in believing,' for 'we know that we *have* passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.'¹ Mark the *steps* of this Christian progress.

I. First, since this heavenly charity is the bestowal of the Holy Ghost, we must pray for it. Oftentimes God transforms what is at the outset mere good-nature into a Christian grace. Often, too, as He can *change* the heart and not merely purify it, the whole bent of a man's mind is altered—he learns to forbear and to forgive—humbleness supplants pride, and mercy malice, and the honouring of all men the exaltation of self; and the Peace of God, not the passion of man, becomes the *ruling* principle, and the soul begins to see that it is to live and work for others, to look on the things of others, to put others in higher places, to please others for their good, to regard others more as God regards them, as created and redeemed for Himself. How shall two immortal beings, reconciled to God in one Body on the Cross, be at enmity between themselves? How shall one for whom Christ died, perish, or be set at nought, or neglected, through me, a partaker with Him in the same promises, washed in the same Precious Blood?

II. When thus the prayer is answered, and we see that the salvation which is come to *our* house, embraces in its purpose the whole wide world, the

¹ 1 St. John, iii. 14.

sense of our own personal responsibility for our brother's welfare wakes up within us. Zacchæus discerns in Jesus the most welcome Guest he can possibly receive, the Saviour of mankind, the Lord of his life; and without delay, the thought of past omissions and of present duties towards his fellow-men finds utterance in those words of his which have quickened so many thousands since: 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.'¹ So too in us, and in all who are, in earnest, *penitent* disciples, there must ever be a thorough desire and steadfast resolution to make *restitution* and *satisfaction*, according to the uttermost of our powers, for any injuries and wrongs done by us to any other. 'Whom have I oppressed? or whom have I defrauded?' must be a question which we put to ourselves, as holy Samuel did, together with the promise of amendment, not really needed in *his* case, 'I will restore it.'² Conscience is a wise master and guide to charity; it shews us where to *begin* in our active ministrations of love. 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done,' is a confession which comes before the other; and though most men say on their death-beds that they have done no harm to others, they need to be solemnly reminded that they have done them but

¹ *S. Luke*, xix. 8.² *1 Sam.* xii. 3.

little *good*, and that 'no life is pleasing to God, that is not useful to man.' While we have time let us pay this debt. Is it indeed *ever* fully paid? Even when we 'owe no man anything,' we still are under the weighty obligation of loving one another. Find out the measure which thou thus owest unto my Lord, and go quickly, and be filling it for Him.

III. And then, next, as the past has to be thus redeemed, our sincerity must be further tested by our use of present opportunities, as they rise before us, each with its promise of blessing. According to the call, so labour; whatever be the opening, use it. The opportunities are almost endless; for, as a master of the spiritual life reminds us, 'the works of mercy are so many as the world hath kinds of misery.'¹ But even in those seven sorts which have been reckoned—the special wants of the body—'meat or drink or clothes, or a house, or liberty, or attendance, or a grave,' we shall learn to do well for the brethren. And is not their soul's need also as great? do they not require at our hands teaching if they are ignorant, counsel when they are in doubt, warning while they are in sin, comfort in affliction, pardon for their offences against *us*, support during their hours of weakness—*prayer*, fervent, earnest, loving, faithful prayer, in all conditions of their life? O may we so use these precious days for the bodies and the souls of others, that it may not be said to

¹ Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

us by the glorious Head of this vast suffering Body, Himself helped or hurt in each of His members, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it *not* to ME.'¹

IV. And then again, the remembrance of Him, not only as our heart-searching Judge, but as the Ever-gracious One, who, like His Father, was 'kind to the unthankful and the evil,'² will lead us to 'do good and lend, hoping for nothing again;' to be merciful as He is merciful—yes, and therefore even to love our *enemies*, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that spitefully use us. Surely, Brethren, if anything shews that charity is of *His* grace, in Whom we are risen to newness of life, not of our old fallen nature, it is *this*—this readiness sincerely to bless them that are given to cursing us. 'Peradventure for a *good* man some would even dare to die,' though scarcely could we reach even to *such* self-sacrifice; 'but God commendeth His Love towards us, in that while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us;'³ and that marvellous loving-kindness is to find, however feebly, some counterpart in *us*; for 'we love' (not Him only, but all the rest *in Him*,) 'because He first loved us.'⁴ He shews us His own dear Self as the Friend of sinners, and says to each of us, (not indeed as if we could make *atonement* for others,

¹ S. Matt. xxv. 45.

² S. Luke, vi. 35.

³ Rom. v. 7, 8.

⁴ 1 S. John, iv. 19.

but as calling us to the ministrations of service,) 'Go and do thou likewise.'¹

V. And yet—once more—while inviting us to follow Him along this His most difficult and painful path, He would have us particularly remember those who are bound up with us in the holiest ties of the Christian brotherhood. For charity begins at home, and our acts and deeds of love are required 'specially' for 'them that are of the household of faith.'² Christ's own are ours, to be loved with an exceeding great love; the little ones baptized into Him more than those not yet cleansed from their birth-sin—those who with us are partakers of the One Bread, dwelling in Him by the constant reception of His Body and Blood, more than those not yet gathered into that holy fellowship—the men of prayer, more than those whom yet we pray for because they never pray for themselves—the students of His Word, more than those who will not search it—the faithful diligent believers in His Name, men and women and children far beyond us in the race, more than those who like ourselves are waverers and unstable and indolent—the lovers of God, more than the lovers of pleasure, whom still we would try to win by all good offices, remembering what we ourselves were in times past; but most, the lovers of God. Yes, Brethren, the nearest to Christ must be the dearest to the Christian. *His*

¹ S. Luke, x. 37.

² Gal. vi. 10.

poorest friend is our best companion, most to be loved and served.

VI. And finally, if the ways of charity, along which we are thus urged to move, seem sometimes hard to our feet, let us evermore press on, recollecting always that because it is the Path of Jesus, leading to His earthly Cross and His heavenly crown, therefore it is unspeakably better for us, with all its thorns and stones, than that broad way of selfish ease and pleasure whereon we walked awhile towards the city of destruction. Let us, in that assurance, no longer 'be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'¹

Many weeks and years are passed away, and too little—yea, scarcely at all—have we worked for the great Head of the Church in His needy suffering members. 'The night cometh, when no man can work;' and it is high time for all of us to awake out of sleep, if we would indeed be taken in real labours of love. Thanks be to Him if we have been brought, in our longing for some sure stay, to find it in the exercise of that true charity which 'never faileth.' Therein, amid many faintings and fears, we do indeed gain rest; for though we *see* not God, in Whom alone our souls can be for ever satisfied, yet 'if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His Love is perfected in us.'² His Love, dimly at first, yet with increasing power and brightness, is

¹ Gal. vi. 9.

² 1 S. John, iv. 12.

reflected in our own ; and little by little our love, as it follows His, fills us with the blessing of His Peace ; till in the end it brings us into the very presence of Him in Whom we have believed, and for Whom in the patience of hope we had waited many days, and by Whose example we had ruled ourselves, loving and beloved. O what a welcome *then*, in His eternal Home, for all those, who, in this world of pain and sin, in the midst of ‘reproach and persecution,’ have gone about, like Jesus, ‘doing good.’

SERMON XIII.

SACRAMENTAL GRACE.

First Sunday in Lent.

S. JOHN, xv. 5.

'Without Me ye can do nothing.'

IF, as we have seen, we are to 'follow after charity,' we are also (the Apostle tells us in the same breath) to 'desire spiritual gifts.'¹ Nay! *because* we are to shew such love, we need, as these imply, powers greater than our own. The very survey of our past life, with its many sins and countless negligences, may serve to remind us that the strength of our fallen nature is too little to withstand the assaults of our enemies from without, and that its very inherent selfishness will hinder us from accomplishing that good work which God meant us to do in the world. Look back on by-gone days, with their wasted opportunities, their unhappy record of hourly duties left undone, of

¹ 1 Corinthians, xiv. 1.

self-will and self-pleasing, of injuries and wrongs done to others, of refusal to take up the Cross of Christ and the labours with God; and then, in your desire for better things, mark how, with all your wishes and purposes, you are ever coming short, sinking down discouraged, making little steady progress homewards, sticking fast in the deep mire, never ending still beginning, seeming to blossom yet yielding no fruit. We would fain 'walk in newness of life;' but such amendment, like the knowledge which we crave for in our ignorance, 'is too wonderful and excellent for' us, we 'cannot attain unto it.' We long to live closer to God, heartily redeeming the time—purchasing, at whatever cost, the season which men tell us is still 'the day of salvation;' giving all diligence, now at last, to make our 'calling and election sure.'¹ But it is an up-hill road, and often a very narrow one; and the dark places are many, and so are the rough places; and we feel ourselves fainting because of the way, and all the more because the time remaining for the journey is so very short. And so, again and again, we cry out in our distress, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' How can we, so lonely and so late, thus offer up, as we are urged to do, the powers of our mind, the service of our body, the devotion of our spirit, to Him from Whom in the past we have so deeply

¹ 2 St. Peter, i. 10.

revolted? The words of our Blessed Lord—His utterance on earth, and His Voice from Heaven—give us the fullest possible answer, both by way of warning and of comfort: ‘Without Me ye can do *nothing*.’ ‘My grace is *sufficient* for thee.’¹ The study of God’s Word and of our own heart, the often infirmities of our flesh, the backwardness of our soul to live for God, alike persuade us of our powerlessness apart from Jesus. And what man can do and suffer *with* Him, and through His strength, the lives of the saints from one generation to another may testify. But let us look more closely at our Saviour’s words; for so we shall learn fresh lessons as to the real cause of our lamentable shortcomings, and besides, as to the remedy which lies before us, if we will but accept it now.

I. First, then, the actual *meaning* of the sentence is missed by most of us. It is not merely, as you might suppose, a declaration that we can accomplish nothing except with the help of Christ. This is, of course, true; but it is not the whole truth, as conveyed by Jesus to His disciples. What He *does* say is this: ‘Apart from Me—separated, severed from Me—ye can do nothing.’ For He is our very Life—we as truly depend upon Him, as the boughs depend upon the tree—it is His own beautiful illustration: ‘I am the Vine, ye are the branches.’² We belong to Him as vitally, draw our spiritual

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

² S. John, xv. 5.

being from Him as thoroughly and as necessarily, as our limbs belong to, and are quickened by, the body. 'Ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.'¹ How is this marvellous union brought about? how are we thus ingrafted? how do we gain this membership? Jesus Himself, and His Apostles, who spake in words which the Holy Ghost taught, assure us that there is a means whereby we receive this blessing. Through an outward visible sign, ordained by Christ Himself, we are admitted into this inward spiritual grace. 'By one Spirit are we all *baptized* into one Body.'² For though the Son of God is as yet unseen by us, and though 'we walk by faith and not by sight,' yet, so long as we are in the flesh, we require certain instruments—not human instruments, but of Divine appointment—to convey to us, to body and soul which are alike *His*, the bestowal from God. Jesus is invisible, and yet He has a Presence as real, a Fellowship as true, as if we could, with His earliest friends, handle Him with our hands; a Presence and a Fellowship still here for us to enjoy. Oh, how much more I ought to think of my baptism, wherein I was made a member of this Holy Christ!³ How thankful I should be to know, that in earliest infancy—before sin, born in me, could issue from me—I was taken from among the

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 27.² 1 Cor. xii. 13.³ Gal. iii. 27; Rom. vi. 3.

'children of wrath,'¹ (as the Scripture calls us all in our natural state,) and united to the Church, which is Christ's Body, 'the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.'² 'Thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted into a good olive tree.'³ In Jesus we were created anew into Vine-branches. Can this be so? you ask. Can these careless impure companions around us, can our own cold stubborn selves, ever have been born again? Can they ever have been vessels of grace? Can they by any possibility have belonged to Jesus as His own? Yes, indeed, my friends, it is but the old grieving of God—'He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth *wild* grapes.'⁴ Is it not thus that our Lord would teach us the guilt, not merely of open ungodliness, but also of that which we are considering together, unprofitableness? Does He say, the useless limb, the barren branch, never belonged to Him? Nay, rather, because *being* His limb it was useless, being His branch it was barren, *therefore* came destruction upon it. 'Every branch *in Me* that beareth not fruit He taketh away.'⁵ 'If a man *abide* not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.' Holy Writ shews us how terribly possible it is for

¹ Eph. ii. 3. The word rendered 'others' in this passage means properly 'the rest of mankind.'

² Eph. i. 23.

³ Rom. xi. 24.

⁴ *Isaiah*, v. 2.

⁵ *S. John*, xv. 2.

one 'baptized into Jesus Christ,' to perish after all through continuance in sin and neglect of grace given; how fearfully real is the danger of defiling the holy Temple of God, which Temple ye are, and so of being destroyed by Him. Sacramental Grace is a very real thing—*so* real, that its very possession makes our fall doubly deep, our sin inexpressibly more deadly. Surely, if I would indeed make up for lost time, I must remember from whence, in the grace of my baptism, I am 'fallen, and repent, and do the first works.'¹ Surely, if the *unbaptized*, in the recollection of a life not spent for God, must begin by being 'baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,'² so that, through the gift of the Holy Ghost, he may no longer be without the new nature in God; those who *have* been baptized ought, in *their* sorrow for the past, to set store by the precious grace so long slighted, and gather it up, without further delay, into their life; so as to change this wilderness of man into the fruitful field of the Lord, and the branch of God's planting, neglected these years, into one that even now He can make strong for Himself.

II. But if, because we are *once* in Christ, it does not follow that we are always in Christ; and if the grace of our baptism lays upon us a great responsibility, before we can have 'grace *for* grace;' what is required of us, besides, in order to the continued

¹ Rev. ii. 5.² Acts, ii. 38.

supply of that Spirit of Jesus Christ, without which we are none of His? He Himself declares this for us. 'He that *abideth* in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.' Clearly then, we are not merely to strive, even in our repentance and shame, after a diligent and sober life; but this very life is itself to spring from our mutual union with the Lord, our unceasing fellowship in His perfections, our ever-realized partaking of His Presence. By faith to cling to Him, to remain with Him, to keep ourselves thoroughly joined to Him, this must be our daily aim and prayer; if *for* Him we would work, and see Him in the suffering, and honour Him in little children, and prove our love for Him by loving all that are His. But this faith must be more than a vague feeling of affection towards an absent Saviour. It must be that principle whereby we regard Him as our living life-giving Head, Who is with us alway even unto the end of the world—as the One Who abides in us and in Whom we abide ourselves—as the Holy One, to Whom our bodies are as members, and Who grants us no mere external privileges, but the real participation in Himself. Faith, if it be full, dares not divide Jesus from His words, or claim to rest in Him, and not also in that which He has ordained. As she accepts the one Sacrament as the outward means of being first joined to Him, so in the other she recognizes *with* adoring thankfulness the means whereby she

may continue in that holy fellowship. What other meaning *can* we attach to that solemn teaching of our Lord's: 'He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him'?¹ For we have here, you see, the very expression² which He used in the words of the verse containing the text, but connected with a mode of mutual indwelling which His after-institution of the Holy Communion alone explained. May we not feel, as we listen, with the Capharnaïtes, to His instruction, with its blended admonition and encouragement, that His Presence in that heavenly Feast, though spiritual is real, and that if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive It, we then 'dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we are one with Christ and Christ with us'?³ Here, if anywhere, we find Him; herein, if in *any* means, His Grace is abundantly bestowed. Nay! 'if there be no grace in the Holy Sacraments, where else shall we expect to find it?'⁴ For He Whom God sent, spake the words of God. Whatsoever He spake, therefore, as the Father said unto Him, *so* He spake;⁵ whatsoever He appointed, that did the Father likewise. And can we make the ordinances, the words, the

¹ S. John, vi. 56.

² The same Greek word is translated 'dwelleth' and 'abideth.'

³ Exhortation to Communicants.

⁴ Bampton Lectures for 1844, (by R. W. Jelf, D.D.) p. 209.

⁵ S. John, xii. 50.

grace of God, of none effect? Rather, Brethren, let us believe in our hearts, that as He Who came to dwell among us was 'full of grace and truth,'¹ so though ever so mysterious, there is absolute truth in His sayings, 'This is My Body,' 'This is My Blood,' and plenteous grace for every earnest penitent in 'the Communion of the Body of Christ,' and 'the Communion of the Blood of Christ.'²

III. Here, then, we have at once the explanation of our past failure and unfruitfulness, and the opening for our success and growth in time to come. Month by month, and year by year, we have let the golden opportunity go by, or have used it negligently, and without that care and prayer before and afterwards, which befits so unspeakable a gift. Again and again, as the Sundays of our life came round, the invitation of our Lord was repeated, and we asked Him to excuse us, because we would not take the trouble to prepare; or we went too easily, with little thought, and little watchfulness, and were not much set forward on our pilgrimage. Yet, when we *have* well searched and examined our consciences, and increased our charity, and received as devout though still imperfect communicants, we have gone back to our work and our cares, refreshed with a multitude of peace, quickened to run with patience the race set before us, purified from the world and its idols, and made strong in the Lord

¹ *S. John*, i. 14.

² *1 Cor.* x. 16.

and in the power of His might against the sin which did so easily beset us. Oh, that we could be always thus :

‘If what my soul doth feel sometimes,
My soul might ever feel!’¹

One comfortable blessed assurance at least we may have, if we are really anxious to cast ourselves on the love and grace of our Lord, amid all trials and temptations, in our bitter regrets and our high desires. ‘Jesus Christ’ is ‘the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;’² the Same in His pardoning mercy, in His wholesome strength, in His sustaining promises. His voice yet stills the trouble of our hearts, as we confess our failures and infirmities. ‘My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ His Arm upholds us, after all our falls, if we will but rise and move onwards, ‘faint, yet pursuing.’ His Hand, even now, holds out for us the beautiful crown, and bids us in His Grace hold fast that we have, so that with Him and like Him we may overcome. His Day is, as truly as ever, our Day of *Bread*, the weekly return of His freely-offered nourishment, of that which is Meat indeed and Drink indeed. His House is, as of old, our *Bethlehem*,³ the place where He Who died for us becomes Himself our Spiritual Food and Sustenance. His

¹ George Herbert, ‘*The Temper.*’

² Heb. xiii. 8.

³ Bethlehem—‘The House of Bread.’

Life is to us, as to all His faithful servants, the Life of the One 'quickening Spirit,'¹ enabling us, by our union with Him, to bring forth fruit, and training us in the fellowship of His sufferings, for the glory of that Eternal Husbandman, Who, accepting us in the Beloved, purgeth us that we 'may bring forth more fruit.'

¹ 1 Corinthians, xv. 45.

SERMON XIV.

ACTIVE FELLOWSHIP WITH THE CHURCH.

Third Sunday in Lent.

ROMANS, xii. 4, 5.

‘As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another.’

THE neglect of sacramental grace in days past goes far to explain the lamentable unprofitableness of our lives. The grace of Holy Baptism forgotten, little stirred up, treated too often as if it had never been, more often rebelled against, according to that warning voice, ‘Grieve *not* the Holy Spirit,’ ‘the Spirit of God’ which ‘dwelleth in you;’¹ the grace of Holy Communion utterly ignored, or put aside for a more convenient season, or lightly regarded through the more pressing force of a sudden temptation or a long cherished habit, or at least hidden from our eyes by a multitude of excuses, scarce one of which we could plead

¹ Eph. iv. 30; 1 Cor. iii. 16.

before God;—all this surely forms a large and deadly ingredient in that cup of bitterness which we have mixed for ourselves, and which has overflowed these many years, to our own great shame and distress.

And when we set ourselves, with real purpose of amendment, to return to the love and service of our Lord; and that we *may* so return, resolve no longer to despise those sacred means appointed by Himself; we are met by this very serious question: ‘Where are these means to be found? in whose keeping are they? to whom were they committed? who, since they must be administered by *men*, are the men who may minister therein for our comfort?’ Notice, I pray you, what the Scripture gives for an answer. Sacramental grace is connected with ‘the Church, which is’ Christ’s ‘Body, the fullness of Him which filleth all in all:’¹ the grace of the *Christening* Sacrament, because it unites us, not in a certainty of glory, but in a state of salvation, with those who were members before us—‘for by One Spirit are we all baptized into One Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;’² the grace of the *strengthening* Sacrament, because it is at once a token and a mode of our continuing in that holy fellowship—‘for we, being many, are One Bread and One Body, for we are all partakers of that

¹ Eph. i. 22, 23.

² 1 Cor. xii. 13.

One Bread.'¹ Thus we pass out of the condemned world into the Church by Baptism—that way ordained by Christ Himself; and, being in the Church, we are held together there, and edified, and made pure, by the Holy Communion, in which we have not only the *ordinance*, but also the *Presence* of the same Divine Lord, that we should not fall back into our former condition, and so 'be condemned with the world.'² If then by the one, duly applied, we are brought *into* the Church, and by the other, rightly received, we are preserved *in* the Church, it is clear that each of these must be administered to us by those who themselves belong to the Church; and this thought alone might be enough to make us abide in her unity. But further, if the ministers of the Church are thus the 'stewards of' these 'mysteries of God,'³ we must go back another step, and find out what is meant by the Church. What do I understand when I say, 'I believe the Holy Catholic Church'? The truth is, Brethren, we often go on year after year repeating with our mouths the grand verities of our glorious Christian Creeds, without any real living comprehension of them in our hearts. And with most of us, religion is so much an outside thing, and forgetfulness of God so much the habit of our life, that we are content, in this and in other matters, with a mere lip-service, and just skim the

¹ 1 Cor. x. 17.² *Ib.* xi. 32.³ *Ib.* iv. 1.

surface of His Word, instead of humbling ourselves to seek the guidance of that Spirit Who 'searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.'¹ But with many, there comes a time when the fruitlessness of our ways, as far as the other world is concerned, is borne in upon us; and after a deep tribulation in repentance, we realize the blessed assurance, that we have had an entrance ministered to us already into Christ's Kingdom, and that we have but to use its privileges, and to fulfil its duties, in order to make up, through the merits of our Saviour, for our selfish, unthankful, careless course hitherto. For the *nature* of this Kingdom, which is the Church, will reprove our selfishness, and by God's grace remove it too. The *blessings* offered to us therein, as they *have* been offered all along, will shew us our unthankfulness, and exhort us to an instant gratitude henceforth. The *duties* proposed to us, as Churchmen and Churchwomen at last aroused, will win us at once to a sense of our past carelessness, and of the necessity laid upon us now, of active work.

I. I wake up, then, from my long sleep in sinful self-chosen ways, and I go to Jesus; for I am indeed heavy-laden, and need rest unto my soul, a refuge from the storm, help in my loneliness. In Him all is changed. Safe in His wounded Side, bearing His easy yoke, bound to His Cross of life

¹ 1 Corinthians, ii. 10.

in death, I am delivered from the burden of my fears, and am no longer desolate. Nay, more! He points out to me—even on earth, where my eyes cannot see *Him*—a *visible* Help, Refuge, and Rest, provided by, and associated with, Himself; for He tells me, that on the rock of His Apostle's confession, He has, according to His Promise, built His 'Church,' and that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'¹

1. Now our English term 'Church' signifies 'the Lord's People;' and the Greek word conveys the same meaning—a congregation of people summoned out of the world. And so, if we search the Scriptures, we learn that the Christian Church is a company of persons, calling on the Name of the 'One Lord,' professing the 'one Faith,' admitted by the 'one Baptism.'² Thus even a few believers gathered together in one house are counted as the Church: 'the Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila'—'Nymphas and the Church which is in his house.'³ Yet all such congregations, great or small, are spoken of together as *one* Church. As *we* talk, not of the Churches of England, but of the Church of England; so S. Paul writes to the Church of the Thessalonians; and S. Luke describes the 'persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem; and S. John, while commanded by the

¹ S. Matt. xvi. 18.

² Eph. iv. 5.

³ Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15; Philemon, 2.

Lord Himself to send the Book of the Revelation to the Seven Churches in Asia, evidently addresses not distinct Churches in the same town, or even in the same part of the country, but has his separate messages from the Spirit, for the Bishops of *different* cities and of *different* districts. And as the number of the Churches followed the number of the Angels, that is of the Bishops or chief rulers, so 'all the Churches of all cities and all nations in the world make up one Church under One Governor, Jesus Christ, "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls,"'¹ as we have declared over and over again ourselves, 'I believe One Catholic and Apostolic Church.' This is our Home. If we wander from it to teachers and places of our own appointment, can we expect the fullness of peace?²

2. But next, it is God's household. Its members 'are no more strangers and foreigners,'³ such as we are in our natural unbaptized state, but belong to

¹ See Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Art. ix.

² Is there not a strange misconception underlying that curious phrase, 'Christians of all denominations,' as if to the original name of a Christian had been added, for instance, the appellation of a Churchman? But in truth the disciples of the way of Jesus were not only spoken of in anticipation as the Church by the Divine Founder Himself, but were also known as the Church several years before they were 'called Christians.' (*Acts*, xi. 26; *Cf.* v. 11; viii. 1.) The title *Christian*, itself a Gentile term, is only used thrice in the New Testament, while we read of *the Church*, as a whole or in its branches, more than a hundred times.

³ *Eph.* ii. 19.

the family of God. Their birth left them in the vast kinship of the world. Their second birth brings them—still as men, and not as saints—into the unspeakably better Brotherhood of God's Own Son; for being 'born of water and of the Spirit,'¹ we receive 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father!'² Our very regeneration—though only 'spiritual infancy'—the frail undeveloped beginning of the 'perfect man'—does yet place us, as an act of God separating our souls and bodies for Himself, among His sons and daughters. Thus the Church is a direct witness to the world, that 'the Tabernacle of God is' already, in a manner, 'with men;' and that the dwellers in her fold can walk up and down in His Name, in the happy yet serious behaviour which befits so glorious a Presence. For to each of these adopted children He saith, in tones of encouragement, 'Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine.' It is into this family that *we* have been taken. How perilous to leave it, separating from our brethren! How dreadful, when we *have* left it, to remain longer in the far country, instead of rising up and going to our Father, that He may welcome us back, though most unworthy of the title, yet still as sons!

3. But again: how does the Church, and every member of the same, acquire such nearness to

¹ S. John, iii. 5.

² Rom. viii. 15.

God as is implied in the honourable name of His Household? Because (and here too we have the very language of Holy Writ) those who belong to the Church 'are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.'¹ Say what you will about this being a figurative form of speech, it yet conveys to us, as did our Lord's own similitude of the vine, the blessed truth, that there is a real, active, living union betwixt Christ and His Church, and that since it is thus joined to Him, it is most near and dear to God. Can it be safe to ignore such a truth? Is it not much to be feared, that by trying to live apart from the Church, and thus practically promoting schism,² we should 'not' be 'holding the

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 27.

² Many persons, of course, dissent from the Church of England because it is established by law, and would join her fold directly the union were dissolved. But surely this establishment—though, as we believe, a providential help and defence for the country—is merely of the accidents, not of the essence of the Church, and cannot justify what is to all intents and purposes a separation from her in her spiritual character. And what shall we say as to *doctrine*? The writer has had some intercourse with those who dissent, one of whom expressed to him what may be the feeling of very many earnest men among them, by saying that it was 'a cross to be obliged to differ from the Church on such and such a point.' Surely we are not obliged to secede; and it would be a part of true wisdom and humility to submit to the judgment of the Church, instead of continuing to 'cause divisions.' Does not the Apostle tell us that it is a *carnal* thing for one to say, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos'? Is Christ divided? God grant that we may 'all speak the same thing;' so 'that there be no divisions among' us, but that we may 'be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment!' Even *England, united in religion*, would be a blessing to the world.

Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God'?¹

4. And there is yet another description of the Church given us in the word of Truth. It is a Building, 'built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.'² For the Presence of that Eternal Spirit—Who came from Heaven, according to Christ's promise, to abide for ever with His Church—so dwelleth in her, that not only the body of every individual Christian, but the whole company of the faithful, becomes His Sanctuary and Shrine—'the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in' us. And, my Brethren, however little you may as yet realize the fact, all of *you* who have been baptized into Christ, are in Him 'builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit.'

II. But the important question for us is, of course, not merely whether we are already joined to the Church whose nature we have been considering, but whether, tried by certain tests, we are continuing in that holy fellowship; and to remain in this, which is so thoroughly consecrated to the ever-blessed Trinity, as to be termed the Household of the First Person, the Body of the Second, the Temple

¹ Col. ii. 19.

² Eph. ii. 19-21.

of the Third, requires, I need hardly tell you, something more than that first *baptismal* union. The marks are written for us; directly the Church was formed, we find them specially mentioned. What did those three thousand do, who had sworn the ranks of the 'hundred and twenty,' believing and being baptized? 'They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.'¹ *Our* duty, too lies here.

1. First, as joined to the Apostolic Church, we must keep the Apostolic *doctrine*—the teaching which they gave then by word of mouth, afterwards by the written Gospel and Epistle. The Apostles' doctrine, which was indeed the doctrine of Jesus Christ Who sent them, became the settled doctrine of the Church, some twenty years before the earliest book of the New Testament,² and sixty years before the last book,³ was composed. The recollection of this simple fact would alone make us hold firmly to Church teaching. As 'the Church in the Wilderness'⁴ was founded before the Old Testament, (Moses, the leader of that Church, being as you know, the very first who wrote any part of it,) so the Church of the Apostles was established before the New Testament; for that very New Testament testifies to the existence of this Church

¹ Acts, ii. 41, 42.

² 1 Thessalonians.

³ *The Gospel* according to S. John.

⁴ Acts, vii. 38.

at the time it was written. And therefore to 'refuse to hear the Church' would be to make oneself 'as an heathen man;' ¹ it would be to set aside the first witness which God gave us—that very witness to which we owe, under His Providence, the preservation of the other; it would be to neglect the Voice of the Church of God, which is 'the pillar and ground of the truth.' ² But accept the two together, and then you learn that Church teaching is indeed Bible truth. Sit at the feet of that 'Mother of us all,' (as did S. Augustine even with *such* an earthly mother as Monica,) and then take up the written volume, and you shall 'know the certainty of those things wherein' you have 'been instructed.' ³

2. Then, in the next place, we are to hold fast the *fellowship* of the Apostles. In the primitive days, indeed, in which they lived, this implied a community of goods, for we are told that 'they had all things in common; but this could not long be maintained, except in the spirit of that Christian charity which is now, as of old, the same, leading us to look not merely on our 'own things, but every man also on the things of others.' ⁴ 'If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food,' if the poor members of the English Church be suffering from sickness, we must be ready—

¹ S. Matt. xviii. 17.

² 1 Tim. iii. 15.

³ S. Luke, i. 4.

⁴ Phil. ii. 4.

because, like ourselves, they belong to Christ—to ‘give them such things as be needful to the body;’¹ otherwise, though our doctrine be ever so true, our religion will be utterly false. If one member suffers, we must ‘suffer with him;’ or if one member be honoured, we must ‘rejoice with him;’² else, instead of proving ourselves Churchmen in sincerity, we shall fall back into the former unprofitable state, as men of selfish, envious, uncharitable lives. Our love, remember, for the unseen God, is tested by the measure of our love for the brother whom we *have* seen. Who was it that said, ‘By this shall all men know that ye are *My* disciples, if ye have love one to another’?³

3. Nor must we forget that other bond of union expressed by *the breaking of the Bread*. ‘*All*’ who counted themselves in the Church in the Apostles’ time, were, as we noticed before, ‘partakers of that One Bread.’ The service of that Sacrament was as thoroughly a part of the Lord’s Day, as the petition ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ was a part of the Lord’s Prayer. They would just as soon have thought of renouncing their belief in the Atonement through their Saviour’s Blood, as of rejecting their share of that Cup, which their Saviour called ‘the New Testament in’ His ‘Blood.’⁴

¹ S. James, ii. 15, 16.

² 1 Cor. xii. 26.

³ S. John, xiii. 35.

⁴ S. Luke, xxii. 20.

What would S. Peter have said, or S. John, or S. Paul, or any of the humblest disciples of that time, had they been present at *our* worship, and had seen three or four hundred professed Christians get away as fast as they could from the ten or twenty or fifty who remained to receive that sacred Cup, that heavenly Food? Would they not have uttered a cry like that of the Psalmist, 'The faithful are minished from among the children of men'? O my Friends! no *slight* cause should make us thus separate ourselves; and if it is as great a cause as an evil deed or a habit of sin, for the Lord's sake let us repent and amend, and so, before it is too late, 'eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.'¹

4. A further token there is of the sincerity of our Churchmanship—that is, of the reality of our regard for the Head of the Church. I mean, the store we set by '*the Prayers*.' These, as maintained by the early Christians, were evidently not so much their private devotions, (though these too were urgently pressed upon them,) as the public petitions of the whole body of believers, lifting up their voices with one accord, 'continuing daily with one accord in the Temple,' saying 'Amen' with one accord at the giving of thanks. They knew what their Lord had promised them; they recognized His meritorious Presence in the midst of them;

¹ 1 Corinthians, xi. 28.

they realized the in-dwelling Spirit's intercession; and they worshipped with one heart and voice. And so, if there were no giants in the earth in those days, there were men and women whose strength in unity was greater still; for by the prayer of faith they removed mountains, opening the iron doors by a better power than Samson's,¹ and putting to flight the armies of the alien spirits by a challenge grander than Goliath's.² And, Brethren, might not this be so with us? Might not our common prayers, if they were thoroughly hearty, do wonders in Heaven and signs on the earth? Might not the worship of our little Sanctuary—if joined to the supplications of those other countless bands of the one great army of the living God—bring down abundant blessings on the world, from Him Who is ever ready to hear the devout prayers of His Church? Aye! and might not the increase of spiritual gifts among ourselves be marvellously greater, if but a few of us would meet when we can on a working day, making a sacrifice of time for conscience sake, in order to call on Him Who has said, that 'if two of' us 'shall agree on earth, as touching anything that' we 'shall ask, it shall be done for' us 'of' our 'Father Which is in Heaven'?³

¹ Acts, xii. 5; xvi. 25.

² S. Matt. xvii. 21; S. Luke, x. 17; Acts, xvi. 18; iv. 30.

³ S. Matt. xviii. 19.

5. Need I remind a Christian congregation that there is yet (in the Eyes of God, though not always within the ken of man) one other characteristic of the members of Christ's Body—'*holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord'?¹ We are to be holy members of His holy Church. It is to this that all these other tokens point, and towards which they help us. Why is the doctrine given us, but that we may shape our lives according to it, walking in the path revealed, the way of His Commandments? What avails the fact of our fellowship with others, if it does not make us earnest, self-denying, discreet, Christian in our charity? Why do we receive the Holy Communion, but that we may live more as members of Christ, keeping ourselves by His Presence more and more pure from sin? Wherefore should we join in the prayers of the Militant Church, but that we may go forth in the might imparted thereby for the battle that is against us, and stand contending—under the shield of *His* Love, the encouragement of *His* Voice, Who 'ever liveth to make intercession for' us²—as 'more than conquerors'? But oh! how can I prevail, how can I be sanctified, if either through thoughtlessness or wilfulness I sever myself from the strength and holiness of *His* Church, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy?

¹ Heb. xii. 14.² Heb. vii. 25.

III. Glance for a moment at the *privileges* of the Church, and you will resolve to keep closer and closer to her. All these means of grace, indeed, of which we have spoken, are real and blessed privileges. But he who faithfully uses them, will find besides, the fulfilment, partly here and partly hereafter, of other 'exceeding great and precious promises;' in this present time the Communion of saints and the Forgiveness of sins, and 'in *that day*' the Resurrection of the body and the Life everlasting.¹ In the Church, if I am but true to my calling, all these are assured to me—in the Church, for this is the Body of Him in Whom alone the covenant was made. I have indeed a *visible* fellowship in her—an assembly which can be seen and heard—a vine, whose branches are overshadowing the world, and a fruitful bough whereof is flourishing among us in this land. But there is offered to me as well an *invisible* communion; with the unseen hosts of God we are brought, even here—even if gathered together by but 'two or three,' even when most alone—into closest ties. Already the innumerable company of angels compasseth us about, though we hear not the sound of the great rushing of their wings, nor behold with our bodily eyes the glorious beauty of the blessed watchers of God. Already, in the desolation of our souls, we are comforted with the assured belief

¹ See '*The Catechist's Manual*.'

that in Christ we still are one with the spirits of the just, our own dear friends, departed in His faith and fear. Even here below we are united in bonds of holiest brotherhood with the true saints of God, those unknown yet well-known members of His, the secret ones of Jesus. In the Church, too, says the penitent, I can obtain *the Forgiveness of sins*; for this I was baptized into Him Who is her Head; this I can always receive from her ministers appointed by Him; this will be for ever granted to me in the Great Memorial—the perpetual conveyance of *His Sacrifice*, Who died to save sinners. And as I have *these* bestowals now, so in this fellowship of the redeemed I look for *the Resurrection of the Body*; believing, on the testimony of God, that He Whose temple we are will restore even this outward frame of ours, changing it into that which is not corruptible; ‘for if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in’ us, ‘He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken’ our ‘mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in’ us.¹ And therefore, finally, I expect, in the humble confidence of a Christian Churchman, *the Life everlasting* as the crown of all. For if, even in this imperfect state, we ‘are come to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven’²—in that eternal world, when we wake up after the image of the

¹ Rom. viii. 11.² Heb. xii. 23.

Sinless One, our place in the many mansions of the Church triumphant will be a rest to us for ever.

Therefore, seeing that we look for such things, seeing that already we possess such priceless privileges, 'what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' 'These are given to us "to profit withal." It is not the being in the Church, but the living and growing in it, which shall avail us in the Day of Harvest. It is no partial obedience which can unite us perfectly to the Head, even Christ: it is growing up into Him in all things.'¹ Yet little by little, if we are but in earnest—if, instead of thinking we cannot enter into these spiritual matters, we strive to realize what we are—we shall gain more acquaintance with Jesus, and grow more in His likeness, 'till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'²

The holy Church throughout all the world awaits that consummation. Look upon her, and consider her well. Checked, reviled, persecuted, misrepresented, cast down at times through fightings without or fears within, hindered awhile by her own

¹ Bampton Lectures for 1844, by R. W. Jelf, D. D. Serm. II.

² Eph. iv. 13.

unhappy divisions—she yet advances in the might of her Lord, as bright and fresh as ever, after eighteen centuries of toil, since He, according to His Promise,¹ is always with her, even unto the end—always, according to His Prayer,² desiring for her, labouring in her, drawing, startling, correcting her, that her scattered children may be *one*, for the conversion of the world and the glory of the Triune God. With Him she goeth forth, conquering and to conquer; with Him, ‘the Prince of peace,’ winning, not with a sword, the nations of the earth; with Him, in the calm power of His majestic Presence, fearless as to the final issue, she ‘looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible,’ to the evil spirits round about, ‘as an army with banners.’³

Often and often, in the days of our coldness and isolation, we have stood aloof from this gathering, moving, rejoicing multitude, unable to appreciate the gladness and faith of her festivals, the frequency of her Eucharistic celebrations, the steadfastness of her order, the transforming reviving vigour of her onward march. Again and again, in some greater crisis of her history, or at some of her seasons of special thanksgiving for deliverance, we have listened, with the blind man, to the sound of those many voices, the expression of those many hearts,

¹ S. Matt. xxviii. 20.

² S. John, xvii. 11, 20–23.

³ Canticles, vi. 10.

stirred as by one impulse of hope or of anxiety, of prayer or joy :

‘I heard the music of the Psalms
Thy people sang to Thee,
I felt the waving of their palms,
And yet I could not see.’¹

But as we ask, in the real desire to learn, what it means, and are instructed (in the divinely edifying humility and love of those who would be ‘taught of God’) about the nature and power and blessings of His Church, we begin to enter heart and soul into the quickening life of her communion, and the eyes of our understanding are enlightened to find that we have no sure way of maintaining our incorporation into Christ, but by abiding with His mystical Body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people. Pray for this heavenly discernment, while Jesus still passeth by ; pray for this spirit of union, this bond of peace and fellowship, which we need so much for ourselves and for our country. There are men in this land of ours, refraining as yet from hearty co-operation with us, much thought of and admired in the state, but having no name as Churchmen. What might not these become, what might they not do even better for those who honour them, if they would be, according to these present opportunities, real helpers to the Society of Christ,

¹ *De la Mothe Fouquè, (in Lyra Germanica.)*

humbling themselves, like Victorinus of old,² to join in the full membership of the Church, to the passing astonishment of the world, and the everlasting joy of the brethren? There are some of us who have to look back—of course upon sin, but specially upon an aimless desultory life. And have we not a new and decided purpose marked out for us, a thoroughly active and most blessed work allotted us, in the missions and rules and charities of this vast confraternity, this all-embracing sisterhood, ancient yet ever renewed? Take up, as no longer selfish, no longer lonely, those labours of love; and *you* too shall press forward with the militant Church—strong in her strength, at rest in her quietness, established in your personal faith by the devout repetition of her Creeds, lifted by her clasped and ministering hands out of the painful childishness¹ of a doubting mind carried hither and thither by the sleight of men—into the ever-increasing conviction and assurance that the Church of God, with her brave endurance of persecution and her out-spoken fearlessness in council, her continual witness and her constant sifting, her

² A most learned and famous doctor and rhetorician, who lived about the middle of the fourth century. S. Augustine (Confess. viii. 4.) has left a very interesting account of his courage in becoming a Christian, and of his giving in his name, '*ut per Baptismum regeneraretur, mirante Româ, gaudente Ecclesiâ.*'

¹ Ephesians, iv. 14.

chain of evidence and her stream of martyrdom, is indeed the safe guide and stay for every one of us, as founded upon the Rock, and holding forth the Word, never-failing ever-Divine in her consolation, because within her dwelleth the Holy Ghost the Comforter, the Giver of life and the Spirit of truth.

SERMON XV.

THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE HEAD COMPLETED
IN THE AFFLICTED MEMBERS.

Mid-Lent Sunday.

COLOSSIANS, i. 24.

'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church.'

TO realize at last our fellowship with the Church of Christ, to grow in her growth, as she increases in the Lord, and be strengthened with the strength which comes to her from her glorified Head, is, we have seen, a real means of escape from the perils of a life of unprofitableness, as well as a real means of grace towards that twofold consummation which we long for—the redemption of our time here, and of our bodies and souls hereafter. Thus only can the Church of our Baptism become the Church of our daily life, and the Household of our adoption on earth prove the Home of our everlasting glory in Heaven.

But the Church, which is thus continually moving

onward and upward, and in which alone we have alike our standing and our hope, is the Body of One Who was crucified, and is herself therefore called upon to suffer. And so, Brethren in Christ, *we* too must be prepared to accompany her through her night of weeping, if, with her, we would be partakers of the morn of song. If in the past, notwithstanding our search for pleasure, and our selfish indolence, (yes, and *because* of these,) we have pierced ourselves through with many sorrows, living as we did 'after the flesh,' we must expect, now that our life is 'in the Spirit,' to share not only the blessings of the kingdom, which are for ever, but also for this 'little while' the trials and troubles of the saints of the Lord. Nay! will not one vital test of our *sincerity* in the fellowship of His new Creation, be our readiness to endure hardness as His good soldiers and her true members, risen as we are in Him, 'from dead works to serve the living God,'¹ partly in *doing*, and partly in *bearing*, His Will?

This, assuredly, was the purpose of that great Apostle, who was taught from the very first days of his conversion, 'how great things he must suffer'² for Christ's Name, and who knew, through the unerring voice of that Saviour Who converted him, that the Holy Church, with which he was thus constrained to suffer, was indeed one with the 'Man

¹ Heb. ix. 14.

² Acts, ix. 16.

of sorrows,' persecuted then, as afterwards ministered unto, by him, in the persecuted members of the Body.¹ It was not merely that S. Paul had thenceforth to go through all manner of hardships, being 'beaten with rods,' 'stoned,' shipwrecked, imperilled through robbers, through his own countrymen, through the heathen, tried by 'weariness and painfulness,' by 'watchings often,' by 'hunger and thirst,' by 'fastings often,' by 'cold and nakedness,'² for much of this he could have borne in the vigorous zeal of his old self-righteousness. But the grand lesson which he had learnt through 'the heavenly vision' was *this*—to do all such things, and much much more, not for his own glory, but for Jesus; 'to take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, *for Christ's sake*;' ³ for Him and for His members, to be 'made' (it is his own strong expression) 'as the filth of the world;' ⁴ to 'suffer trouble, as an evil-doer, even unto bonds,' enduring 'all things for the elect's sakes, that they also' might 'obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.'⁵ The Cross of the Son of God, Who had so loved him, gave the rule and measure for that mortified life of his, whereby his own devoted, burning, passionate love for the One so precious was to be shewn more and more even to the end. Nor was his any insincere

¹ Acts, ix. 4.² 2 Cor. xi. 25.³ *Ib.* xii. 10.⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 13.⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

profession of affection for an absent Saviour, but rather the utterance of that living faith, which made him acknowledge a Divine Presence within himself, and led him to regard the brethren, Jews and Gentiles, as members of the same Body, endued with the same Life, quickened by the same Spirit, belonging to that same Lord, Who, though not seen Himself, could be seen and served in them. Grace had expelled his selfishness; and he was willing to go through afflictions with the afflicted Church—ay! and to place in his very heart the troubled souls who were ‘of that way,’ ‘to live and to die with’ them.¹

This high aim and purpose of the Apostle are brought out very remarkably in this striking passage of the Epistle to the Colossians—a passage which is indeed specially a call to us who are in the ministry, but which also should come home to the heart of every Christian, teaching him that he too has part and lot in this matter, a share in this privilege of suffering, a fellowship of adversity with the Lord, a bond of union with that ‘patience of the saints,’ which enables them not only to endure all bitterness themselves, but to ‘bear one another’s burdens.’

Let us accept the guidance of those who were in Christ before us, and search this Scripture, if so be that we may find therein those ‘old paths’ which

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 3.

we have left awhile, but which, though narrow, are safe.

I. First, then, we gather, that the Church's portion in this world is tribulation. It is a law of that kingdom of God to which we belong, that all who enter it should pass through a probation of pain. Over that 'strait gate' which leads thereto, those solemn heart-searching words of our Lord are written, once for all: 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.'¹ The *Via dolorosa* was *His* path, and it *must* be ours. The Cross, though a tree of healing, became for us, as it was for Him, a tree also of shame. The agonizing sword which pierced through the inmost soul of the ever-Virgin Mother, in that awful bitterness for her First-born,² was but a type of the distress, which flowing from the marred Visage of the Saviour along the ages, has settled on each generation of the saved; and though, with her, we sing our jubilant *Magnificat*—the daily thanksgiving of redeemed humanity—we know full well that, even as the sons and daughters of God, we are the brethren and sisters, nay more, the very members, of a Divine Sufferer, called, amid the joy of faith, to grieve for Him, and, with all patience in hope, to 'groan within ourselves.' True citizenship in His kingdom, faithful imitation of His example, thorough communion with His Church, can never consist

¹ S. Matt. x. 38.

² S. Luke, ii. 35.

with a life of ease, of self-pleasing, of friendship with the world. Jesus chooses us out of the world, and therefore the world hateth us; its aims, its principles, its standard of right and wrong, its hopes and fears, its very joys and sorrows, are different from ours. The Church is the witness for God, and the world is the witness for its prince; and these are contrary the one to the other. The love of God is met by the hatred of the devil—the joy of God, by Satan’s envious scorn—the Peace of God, by the wrath, strife, malice, and uncharitableness of the enemy. And those who cherish these graces, that Church which puts forth this fruit of the Spirit, must be guarded against the onset of those evil angels and those evil men whose object is to hinder our Lord’s good work. ‘All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’¹ Fightings without, fears within, infidelity in the open field, treachery inside the walls, shameless sin walking abroad, secret defilement at home, zealous opposition from her foes, coldness and indifference from her own children, constant checks in her progress, schisms preventing her unity, chains of restraint galling and oppressing her; this is the bitter experience of the Church, as she sighs after her ‘glorious liberty’—her ‘one faith’—her steady upgrowth—her final inheritance in light. And as with the Body as a whole, so with the members in

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

particular. I desire to join in her communion, but am afraid of the revilings of men. I add my prayers to hers, but am scoffed at as a hypocrite. I study, according to her rule, the Holy Scriptures, but there rises up a flood 'of trouble and of rebuke and blasphemy.' I speak a word for my Lord, and men set themselves against me round about. I kneel, and they smite me on the face. I strive to be sober and chaste, and they go about with lies to destroy me. I need sympathy and a helping hand, and they hide themselves from me. I am fallen, and they look at me with curious rudeness, and point the finger of contempt, and pass by on the other side. Such, you tell me, is the treatment you have to put up with. Yes! and many of you confess that you sink under it to the level of the world, instead of standing manfully with the militant Church, and giving battle for your Lord.

II. And yet there is one thought which should empower us to suffer such things. These are *His* sorrows. 'All the tribulations of Christ's Body are Christ's tribulations. These are the sufferings of Christ, because the Church is His own Body, in which since He dwells and lives He suffers also.'¹ He is quite one with her, and therefore, though His own wounds and bruises are for ever finished, yet her distresses, as gradually from age to age they are unfolded, are thoroughly His—so thoroughly, that

¹ Alford.

the remaining pains of the Church between His Death and His Return, are filling up the full measure of His awful grief, 'that which is *behind* of the sufferings of Christ.' It is not meant, of course, that aught can be lacking to 'those *meritorious* sufferings which He bore in His Person once for all, the measure of which was for ever filled by the one sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, on the Cross.' *Our* merits are not accepted for others, nor can any mere man, be his sufferings ever so Christian, 'deliver his brother, or make agreement unto God for him.' Into that field of the Precious Blood we dare not step. That wine-press He has trodden alone, and of the people there was none with Him.¹ The sorrow of our sin He hath carried by Himself; and, except when we crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame by our ungodliness, the Redeemer's special agony has been for ever ended. But He is regarded here as suffering with His suffering members, and bearing them in Himself, according to the saying of His prophet, 'In all their affliction *He* was afflicted.'² Even in the *least* of His brethren, the Saviour is concerned. Could Paul the Apostle ever have forgotten the terrible revelation to Saul the Pharisee—'Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou Me?' Think you that that bitter remembrance was absent from him when he spoke, as here, of 'the afflictions of Christ'? No,

¹ *Isaiah*, lxi. 3

² *Ib.* 9.

indeed; but it recurred to him now as a comfort in his own ministerial trials—it assured him of the sympathizing Brotherhood of Jesus—it enabled him to realize the blessedness of those great conflicts and cares, which united him to such a Presence.

‘Thy life on earth was grief, and Thou art still
Constant unto it, making it to be
A point of honour, now to grieve in me,
And in Thy members suffer ill.’¹

Is not this *our* consolation also, that Christ is carrying on, through us, His own endurance of pain and woe? Can we not believe that He is bringing to pass, in us and for us, that ‘strange work,’ which made God the Son a man ‘acquainted with grief’? Is He not accomplishing, in His sore-troubled Church, that same purpose which was accomplished in His own human Nature, made ‘perfect through sufferings’?²

III. Surely it is so; for (as one lately called from among us writes,) ‘Whatever the Church has to suffer even to the end, she suffers for her perfection in holiness and her completion in Him; for the tribulations of Christ will not be complete till the last pang shall have past, and the last tear have been shed.’³ *He* (we may be persuaded) Who loved the Church and gave Himself for it, would and will go on moulding her in the furnace of

¹ George Herbert. ‘*Affliction*.’

² Heb. ii. 10.

³ Dean Alford.

adversity, wherein even now He walketh, though the flame is exceeding hot, in order at last to 'present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.'¹ He fits her, by long patience, for the Harvest—by weary cross-bearing, for the throne of rest—by the crown of thorns, for the crown of glory—by manifold temptations, for blameless righteousness in Him—by fighting the good fight, for His eternal Peace—by the prayer of faith amid her unhappy divisions, for the joy unspeakable of One Fold under One Shepherd—by the endurance of the 'contradiction of sinners,' for her perfect harmony with Him in Whom 'is *no sin*.' Her sorrows are indeed His own, for her enemies are His; her hatred of sin is a reflection of His own; her agony in the feeling of loneliness and desertion, some image of *His* horror and distress, Whose cry went up to the Father, 'My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?'²

IV. And as with the Body, so with the members. For each individual, 'every suffering saint of God in every age and position, is, in fact, filling up, in his place and degree, the afflictions of Christ, in his flesh and on behalf of the Christian body. Not a pang, not a tear, is in vain.' You give up your selfish slothful life, and you work, pray, suffer, for the Church. Instead of shifting *your* share of the

¹ Eph. v. 27.

² S. Mark, xv. 34.

burden on others, your endurance is blest to be a relief for *them*. 'The measure of the sufferings, which the whole Church must drink, is fixed; the more, therefore, you consent to take at the hand of the Lord, the less you leave for others.'¹ Was not this what the Apostle of the Gentiles said to himself? Was he 'afflicted'? It was for *their* 'consolation and salvation.'² Was he 'bound in the spirit,' chained in the body? Then he was 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ for' *them*.³ Were they fainting at his tribulations? He bade them faint not, for these were *their* glory, borne willingly for *their* sakes.⁴ And so he came not only to glory in tribulations, because therein the power of Christ would rest upon him, but also because he could thus lighten the load of the heavily-laden Church, and cheer her on towards the attainment of her rest.

So too, my Brethren, if you are in earnest, will *your* strength be at the service of the faithful people of God. For to suffer affliction with these is better far than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and on their behalf to go through privation and pain, is a lot more to be desired than the vain religion of a man who calls himself a Christian but will not give up an enjoyment on account of others. For such an one denies Christ, and stands aloof from the hunger and thirst, the nakedness and

¹ *Bengel*.² 2 Cor. i. 6.³ Eph. iii. 1.⁴ *Ib.* iii. 13.

sickness, of that ever-present One. But they who minister to His Church do really minister unto Himself, and those who bear trials for her are bearing the Cross, like Simon of Cyrene, after Jesus. Be you, my friends, like these, and like them more and more. Then, amid the toil and tumult of her war, you will go forward with her in the fearless progress of the armies of the Israel of God. Then, though beset in her communion with manifold temptations, you will 'not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but' will 'rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings.'¹ 'Children' as we are 'of promise,' set free in the Holy Church from the bondage of the world, sons and daughters of the 'Jerusalem which is above,' we must not wonder, if, like Isaac of old, we are mocked by this present Ishmael, with whom for a space we are 'constrained to dwell.' The enmity which existed centuries ago between the two families on earth is the same as ever, and 'as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.'² And yet in our true Brother— notwithstanding all these tribulations—we need never fear that we should be cast out of the inheritance of God. He suffers in our strife: and if the *sufferings* of Christ abound in us, our consolation

¹ 1 S. Peter, iv. 12, 13.² Gal. iv. 29.

also aboundeth by Christ. Even during this trial-time His comforts shall refresh our souls; and when His glory shall be revealed, we shall be glad also with exceeding joy. When His bride shall at last be brought to Him in the eternal city of peace, then shall *we* too find, in membership with her, sure rest for ever. If in her time of anxious sorrowful waiting, thou hast been 'partaker' with her 'of the affliction of the Gospel,' then shall her crown be indeed thine own. If with Jesus thou sufferest here in body and in soul, then shalt thou also reign with Him, when troubled soul and smitten body shall be glorified in the kingdom of our Father.

SERMON XVI.

THE REDEEMER OF OUR TIME.

Palm Sunday

GENESIS, xxii. 7, 8.

‘And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.’

ISAAC, beloved and persecuted, is drawn to the mount of oblation: even though *delivered* from the mockings of Egypt, he must endure the trials of God. In trustful obedience he is to carry, like ‘the Only-begotten of the Father,’ the wood of the burnt-offering, and to go and worship in the sweet strange sorrow of a resignation nigh unto death. And can we wonder that it is ever thus with God’s children—‘heirs of promise,’ yet sufferers of pain? Can we wonder, if the troubled Church is called to the work of self-surrender, or if the contempt and tribulation which, as her members, we have to bear from the world, must be followed by our humble submission to that Will of God, which

requires at our hands the real 'sacrifice and service of' our 'faith'?¹ Nay! we learn through the *power* of this faith the measure and the gladness of that duty, and become, through the grace given unto us, quite *sincere* in our purpose of dedication: 'Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.'²

But then the sacrifice of self can never stand alone. Apart from *Christ* crucified, it can do nothing. It must be met, saved from bitterness, rendered acceptable, brought to perfection, by the Sacrifice of Jesus.

This is, of course, implied throughout this present series of meditations on a subject so momentous to ourselves—a subject which would be momentous to us in any case, but which could only fill us with despair, unless regarded under the bright beams of light which stream forth from the atoning Cross of our dearest Lord. In each sermon, then, this has of necessity been taken for granted; but let us now dwell upon the thought by itself, as *the* source of consolation, the *prime* doctrine of our faith, the really motive power for encouraging fallen man to rise and build, of the stones so long thrown down, an altar unto the Lord. For a while, it may be, (in order that we may learn the exceeding sinfulness

¹ Phil. ii. 17.

² The Prayer of Oblation in the Holy Communion.

of sin,) we have to sorrow for the past, as those that have no hope; but, as we watch and pray, and strive anxiously to do God's Will, the comforting grace of the Holy Ghost assures us (and what a blessed assurance it is!) that Jesu's Death and Resurrection have restored all things, and that therein our wasted time can be recovered for the uses of eternity.

I. First, then, let us bear in mind how thoroughly *real* this doctrine is. That Christ *died* is acknowledged by all, as an historical fact, proved independently of the Scriptures of God, by the testimony of man.¹ But, 'if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater;' and if one solitary sentence of a heathen writer at Rome is accepted as a sufficiently trustworthy record, how much more may we rely upon the authority of those several servants of God in Palestine, who were eye-witnesses of the Word, and among whom the Lord Jesus went in and out from the beginning, and in whose presence He did die, and by whom a full account was given to the world; how much more may we rely upon these, both as credible human witnesses, and as persons chosen of God,² commissioned by His Son,³ and guided by His

¹ Speaking of the Christians, the Roman historian, Tacitus, who was born about A.D. 57, says in his *Annals*, (xv. 44.) 'Auctor nominis ejus Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat.'

² Acts, x. 41.

³ S. John, xx. 21.

Spirit!¹ Now, of their evidence, written as it was under this direction, whole chapters are taken up with the minutest and most circumstantial particulars connected with that Dying of Christ—clearly, from its prominence, the culminating point of their narrative, as His *Resurrection* from the dead was the chief doctrine of their later preaching.² But the very same evidence which establishes this, the very same messengers who convey it to us, shew also that He died *for others*, that His was a *vicarious Sacrifice*.³ Even if we read nothing about *faith* in the Crucified,⁴ nothing about *conversion* to that uplifted Figure,⁵ nothing about *Baptism* into His Death,⁶ nothing about *Holy Communion* as the shewing forth of that Death,⁷ nothing about the *life* which we are to live by the faith of Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us,⁸ nothing about the *constraining* power of that Love which led Him to die ‘for all,’⁹ the one grand truth

¹ S. John, xiv. 26; xv. 26, 27; xvi. 13-15.

² Acts, i. 21, 22.

³ Anyone who wishes to see this, may compare S. Matt. xxvii. 50 with xx. 28; xvi. 21 with xxvi. 28; S. Mark, xv. 37 with x. 45; S. Luke, xxiii. 46 with xxii. 19; S. John, xix. 30 with vi. 51; xx. 27 with xi. 51, 52; S. Peter's words in Acts, ii. 22-24, iii. 13-15, iv. 10, 11, x. 39, 40, with 1 S. Peter, i. 18, 19, ii. 21-24, iii. 18, iv. 1; 1 S. John, v. 6, with i. 7, ii. 2, iv. 10; Rev. i. 17, 18 with i. 5, 6; v. 6 with v. 9.

⁴ Rom. iii. 25.

⁵ S. John, xii. 32.

⁶ Rom. vi. 3.

⁷ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

⁸ Gal. ii. 20.

⁹ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

would still remain, as foretold in the Old Testament, accomplished in that fullness of time, of which the New Testament is the written memorial; the one grand truth that, in that hour which, once struck, sounds on through the ages, 'the WORD OF GOD made flesh, 'bare the sin of many,' as 'the Man Christ Jesus,' the 'One Mediator between God and men,' the One (as He Himself tells us, 'the Amen, the Faithful and True,') through Whom 'the *world* might be saved.'¹ 'It is the essential characteristic of that Death, that in it the Lord stands absolutely alone, offering His Sacrifice without any reference to the faith or the conversion of men, offering it indeed for those who "were yet sinners," and at enmity with God.' He is called our 'propitiation,' our 'ransom,' our 'Passover, sacrificed for us,' 'which, if words mean anything, must imply' (as has been well said) 'that' this sacrifice 'makes a change in the relation between God and man, from separation to union, from wrath to love, and a change in man's state from bondage to freedom.'² It is not, of course, meant to deny that the Passion of our Lord would not avail us, except 'through *faith* in His Blood,' and a sorrowful confession of our sins. We should ill observe this holy week on which we are entering, if we were to walk along the

¹ Isaiah, liii. 5, 6, 12; S. John, i. 1, 14; iii. 17; Rev. xix. 13; iii. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

² Smith's Dict. of the Holy Bible, s. v. Sacrifice.

Redeemer's path without the earnest adoration of penitent believing hearts. But what we should notice is this, that the hill of Calvary had three Crosses fixed upon it, whether we think of it or not; and that the crucifixion of that central Sufferer ('Jesus in the midst,') was *intended* to be an Atonement for all, whether men accepted it or not. And so for *you* who have never yet realized in your heart of hearts the mysterious thought that an offering has been offered for *yourself*, so that *you* should not perish, as well as for *you* who have been stablished, strengthened, settled in this faith for years and years, the Son of God has undoubtedly died. If the preacher could not declare this, he would have absolutely no call to hold forth the Gospel of peace to a general congregation. How else could we, in the Name of Christ, hope to 'draw *all* men unto' Him? But in very deed, my friends, God's Will, though thwarted by so many, was to 'have *all* men to be saved,'¹ and the *glory* of the Cross consists in this, that the eyes of 'the whole world'² may rest there, as they can rest nowhere else, in the Holy God, purchasing mankind 'with His own Blood.'³

II. And oh! the intense *comfort* of this testimony! For does it not tell us, that in Jesu's full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, the penitent, however greatly debased, has sure and certain hope? The 'height'

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

² 1 S. John, ii. 2.

³ Acts, xx. 28.

of Heaven must reach to the 'depth' of earth; and that Love, whose 'length' is Eternity, must cover the whole 'breadth' of time. The time of man's first disobedience, with *such* a punishment yet such a promise;¹ the time of 'the days of Noah,' whose rebellious hearers were not forgotten, more than two thousand years after, by the long-suffering of God the Son, *living in death* with them;² the time of 'the transgressions which were under the first Covenant,' waiting for, and not disappointed of, their 'redemption';³ the time of lengthened expectation, during which 'the prophets inquired and searched diligently' of the coming salvation, and the sufferings so wonderfully foretold;⁴ and in which 'the just and devout' men and women looked 'for the consolation of Israel';⁵ 'the fullness of the time,'⁶ when at last the Holy One came, to die for the people, rejected by them at first, yet afterwards 'believed on';⁷ 'these last days,'⁸ various as eighteen centuries must be, but one and the same era as to the revelation and privileges and promises of the Gospel; our own time, perhaps of utter unfruitfulness when we were without Christ, certainly, even now, of too many shortcomings and too little profit for God:—yes, Brethren, over all this time, and even to the end, so

¹ Gen. iii. 15.² 1 S. Peter, iii. 19, 20.³ Heb. ix. 15.⁴ 1 S. Peter, i. 11.⁵ S. Mark, xv. 43; S. Luke, ii. 25, 38; xxiv. 21. ⁶ Gal. iv. 4.⁷ 1 Tim. iii. 16.⁸ Heb. i. 1, 2.

long as 'the accepted time' shall remain for any sinful soul of man, extends the blessed power of the Cross. To Him Who died thereon, 'a thousand years are as one day;' and He, Whose 'Name is as ointment poured forth' for the healing of the world, is 'the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.'¹ O sorrowful one! is *this* thy complaint? The retrospect of life is so sad; the untilled field of youth and manhood looks so miserable; my beautiful vineyard, which might have been so rich with the pleasant plants of God, is 'all grown over with thorns, and nettles' have 'covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof' is 'broken down.'² Aye! it is indeed painful; look upon it, and consider it well, and receive instruction, and learn the bitter lesson of repentance for that idle 'folding of the hands,' that careless slumbering of the heart. But *then* look out of thyself, look up from this scene of humiliation to the One Redeemer of our time, Who can bring out of the store-house of His Merits pure gold in the stead of that squandered talent, and make the one day yet remaining to us as a thousand years—the barren land of wasted opportunities, as a field which the Lord hath blessed, because yielding at last, through the Blood of His Son, a plenteous harvest for the angel reapers.³ Great and many as have been the diseases and infirmities of our

¹ Heb. xlii. 8.² Prov. xxiv. 30–32.³ S. Aug. Conf. Lib. iv.

souls, the medicine to heal our sickness is greater still, and its virtue is mighty to restore. Nigh though we have been unto death, the knife almost put forth against us by our Father's Hand—there is yet a Voice from Heaven to assure us that we shall not die; and we 'behold' upon the Altar, instead of ourselves, 'the Lamb of God Which taketh away the sin of the world.'¹ And so, not trusting to our feelings—those often most deceitful guides—but believing in that Saviour Whom we have not seen, evidently set forth as crucified for us, by the revelation of Him Who *cannot* deceive us, we pass, as the dying child of Abraham did, 'from death unto life.'

III. And there is yet another thought connected with, and flowing from, this 'strong consolation,' which we gain as to the pardon of our slothful lives, from the Sacrifice of Jesus our Lord. I mean, its *enfranchising* power—the ability it gives us to do, no longer with a slack hand or a faint heart, but with all might and earnestness, the work which lies before us, to be finished in the brief space of a few short years or months. When once the soul is certified, that the neglected duties and sinful habits of its own personal life have been indeed atoned for by the meritorious Passion of so righteous a Saviour as the Son of God must truly be, the path is no longer gloomy, the commandment no longer

¹ S. John, i. 29.

grievous, the conscience no longer morbid—all this is changed; ‘all things are become new,’ full of hope and brightness and encouragement; ‘the bondage of corruption’ is over, and the penitent is lifted up for the beginning of his joy in ‘the glorious liberty of the children of God.’ For in Christ Jesus there is no slavery; *that* is reserved for the awful experience—even in this present world, which they serve—of those who are tied and bound with the chain of their sins.

Therefore, my Brethren, that ye be not again entangled in that yoke of bondage, ‘stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free;’¹ let the time past of your life suffice you to have wrought the unsatisfying will of the Gentiles; for Christ hath suffered for you; and you, as crucified with Christ, have ‘ceased from sin,’ that you ‘no longer should live the rest’ of your ‘time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the Will of God.’²

And if, as yet, the travail of His soul is not brought home to *you*; if to you the doctrine of the Atonement seems something far off from you—a distant hazy scene, not the clear vision of rest and peace—rather a picture of the Church than the great reality for your life; do still set out on the journey. Go, in the obedience of Abraham, in the trustfulness of Isaac, in the sacrifice of self, even to Mount Moriah. Yea, rise up *early* and go; yea,

¹ Gal. v. 1.

² 1 S. Peter, iv. 1, 2.

take the fire of an earnest passionate zeal, and the wood of your burdened hearts, the cross which you are to carry with you. Go, in the diligence of life in death, in the laborious exercise of your body, and the devout aspirations of your spirit, and with the reasonable service of your soul. Go, in the fellowship of the Christian brotherhood, and in the work of that Christian charity which is ever 'doing good ;' and you shall yet find upon that lonely hill-side, as you stand, steadily turning from the desert you have traversed, to the Face of the Lord, your one true Refuge and Consolation—a Sacrifice far better than your own, the only Redeemer of your long-lost time, the only Propitiation for the evil habits you are breaking off, the only Mediator between 'this shaking, falling, failing, earth of ours, and the Eternal glorious King in Heaven ; 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,'¹ in God's foreknowledge of our sins, and His loving purposes for our salvation ; the Lamb of 'the Precious Blood' shed 'for the remission of sins that are past ;'² the Eternal Son, 'the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last,'³ unchangeable in time and in eternity ; Who 'died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them, and rose again.'

¹ Rev. xiii. 8.² Rom. iii. 25.³ Rev. xxii. 13.

SERMON XVII.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED CONSTRAINING
US TO SELF-SACRIFICE.

Good Friday.

2 COR. v. 14, 15.

'The Love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them, and rose again.'

WE stood last Sunday on Mount Moriah with Abraham and Isaac, and looked across the valley of eighteen hundred years¹ to the place of a better Sacrifice, and marked how *real* is the salvation of the Cross, how deep is its *consolation*, how thoroughly it sets us *free*. And now, when over the great and wide sea of eighteen hundred other years that Hill of Calvary rises up before us with its ever-fresh Memorial of Blood, should not the words, with which our meditations closed, be taken up again on this good and much-to-be remembered Day, as the call to earnestness in the

¹ The sacrifice of Isaac took place B.C. 1872.

reformation of our lives? *To-day* we may dwell upon them, not merely in order to remind ourselves, like holiday-makers, that we have liberty; but also that our souls and bodies may be devoted henceforth to the service of the Crucified, Who hath delivered us from so great a death by His own most bitter Passion, that He might draw us thereby to present ourselves 'a living sacrifice' to God.

My Brethren! 'the Dying of the Lord Jesus,' which we are once more commemorating together, ought to bring before us, amid all our thankfulness for so plenteous a Redemption, the serious recollection also of the sins and negligences from which He *hath* redeemed us, and the necessity laid upon us to go forward now as the children of His 'purchased possession,' proving by the patient activity of our membership with Him, that for us Christ has not died in vain. True, that when we have done our best, we are but 'unprofitable servants.'¹ True, that our highest, most watchful, most constant, regard for Him, is a very little thing, compared with His unutterable compassion for us sinners. True, that 'herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'² True, that we must be ever asking Him not to weigh our merits, but to pardon our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; and that we, who owe

¹ *S. Luke*, xvii. 10.

² *1 S. John*, iv. 10.

God a life-time, cannot hope even to satisfy *ourselves* in the work which we do for Him, under the lengthening shadows of a day so brief as ours. And yet, for all this, it is nothing short of our bounden duty, that we should yield ourselves to God the Son with all the regenerate faculties of body, soul, and spirit, as the best proof we can possibly give of the sincerity of our love for Him, Whose Love for *us* was such, that He gave *Himself* for us. 'Saved from destruction,' 'ransomed from the grave,' 'alive from the dead,' 'translated into the Kingdom' of Jesus Christ, turned 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;'—what do all these expressions imply, but the new and blessed *hope* held out to men, of leading, because of the Saviour, a new life, and the *obligation* laid upon them all, to go forth at once for the labours of that new life, as shewing that they do indeed prize 'so great salvation'?

And in truth, my friends, if the Cross is really attractive, it will be motive too; if the rays of 'the Sun of Righteousness' are, as we know them to be, full of light, they will also be full of warmth; if the vision of that 'marred' Countenance and that suffering Form touches the heart with a consoling sweetness, as it learns that 'He hath borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows,'¹ it stirs up also the inmost soul to take up the Cross, for very thank-

¹ Isaiah, liii. 4.

fulness' sake, and bear it after Jesus. This it was which S. Paul so keenly felt for himself, and urged with such burning words on others. This it was which made him 'live by the faith of the Son of God,' as 'crucified *with*' Him;¹ and which called out from him that most excellent rule for a Christian's course, 'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.'² It was this which drew him on through afflictions, and necessities, and distresses, kept him patient 'in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults,' enabled him to persevere 'in labours, in watchings, in fastings.'³ For amid all these things, he remembered ever the loving voice of Him Who had been crucified *for* him, and persecuted *by* him; and had *He* not shewn him 'how great things he must suffer for' His 'Name's sake'?'⁴

So too, my Brethren, must it be with *us*. For we gaze not merely on an historic Christ Who died many centuries ago in the Holy Land, but on our own best Friend, our Jesus, 'the Propitiation for *our* sins,' the Lover of *our* souls, wounded and pierced by us in these latter days, even yesterday and to-day, yet still offering us His Pardon, still pleading for us His all-sufficient Sacrifice, still making intercession for us, still assuring us by the mouth of His

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² Rom. xiv. 8.

³ 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5.

⁴ Acts, ix. 16.

priests, that we have His Body which was broken for *us*, His Blood which was shed for *us*. Thus does He take us back with Him to that actual Death of His, wherein He was once offered to bear the sins of many; and as fresh as ever we see 'before our eyes Jesus Christ evidently set forth, crucified among us.'¹

When a man thus realizes that Sacrifice as necessary and precious for himself, he begins to enter into the spirit of the Apostolic teaching. 'The love of Christ constraineth' him. The very meaning of the word is opened to him in daily experience. For it is not said, Christ's Love *draweth* us; but, that Love constraineth us. It has indeed power to draw, according to the Lord's own prediction—'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.'² But to be *constrained* has something more in it; it signifies our being *held in*—forcibly limited—kept within certain bounds, prevented from roving or from losing sight of the particular object. One great end ever before us, one course ever pursued, one Lord and Master ever loved and served, 'one thing' regarded as ever 'needful,' the one blessed Death leaving us, as we earnestly regard it, but one life to follow—the life of self-sacrifice, self-denial, self-discipline—with the one thought ever present, 'What would Christ have me to do? how shall I please Him best? how shall

¹ Gal. iii. 1.

² S. John, xii. 32.

I get nearest to Him? when shall I come to appear before His glorious Presence? Straight forward leads this course, yet constantly varied, like the stream which is always moving towards that far-distant rest, already touched; now running still and deep through the high banks which close it in; now rushing, as in pain, over the sharp rocks really worn by its waters; now spreading out far and wide to refresh and fertilize the thirsty lands, yet soon hemmed in again in its narrow bed, and helped on by its very straitening, to finish more quickly its allotted task. So acts upon *us* the constraining love of our Lord. Is our portion in this life painful and difficult? We accept it patiently. Are we brought into great distress? We pass through it towards the Kingdom of God. Are we invited to vast responsibilities, the work among a multitude, the care of the Church? We press onwards still. Are we called to forego for a while all pleasant society, devoting ourselves to some special labour of love, some lowly toil for the poor or the penitents of Jesus? We cannot hesitate; for has not *He* commanded us? Is it His Will for me that I should surrender my own choice in matters of occupation or of method, in service or in study? I am content to do it, if *His* Law is within my heart, Who knows what is ever best for me. What if present consolations are withdrawn, if friends and *kindred* droop and die, if I must even stand alone?



Still, 'I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.' Who shall separate me, if I am but in earnest, from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord?

Rather, how I must rejoice (says the Christian) in being thus lifted out of my old ways of idleness and sin! what thanksgivings must rise from my heart to that Good Shepherd Who died for His lost sheep! How greatly, as I look back, must I bless the goodness of God, which was leading me to repentance all along! how gladly must I suffer now the loss of all things, so that I may but win Christ, and be found in Him!¹ how ready should I be to go through fire and water, to shew that I love Him well! Is not this what many of us might say from our very soul, if we would but be true to ourselves, true to those promptings of grace, which bid us first look on our *dead selves*, then on Him Which liveth and was dead, Whose Death was our life, Whose Life has quickened us to rise from our long sleep, and to run with patience the race that is set before us, while it is still called to-day? Exercise yourself to-day in the holy suffering of your Lord; think of His bitter pains, of His awful desolation, of His sense of shame, of the burden laid upon Him in the weight of your iniquity, and then you will learn to exercise yourself in the example of His Holy Life. Set your thoughts with all diligence to consider, not the

¹ Philippians, iii. 8, 9.

mystery, (for that is beyond us,) but the mercy of His Cross and Passion; and then you will go forth, as taught of Him, to do all and to bear all for Him—for Him even to eat and drink, since the body which you nourish is His new creation—for Him to live, because the life of the redeemed does indeed belong to the Redeemer—in Him to die, for that brings you closer to Him in Whom you have believed.

It is indeed most painful to have to recollect how little of this self-surrender there has been in us, and to know that even now we are ever falling back from real active sympathizing uncompromising love for that Divine Surety of ours.

‘Well may we mourn our dull cold heart, and eye
That up the mount of glorious sacrifice
Sees such a little way.’¹

But the Crucified is higher even than the top of the hill; and there is a light upon His Face, mighty to pierce the mists which cloud our vision. As we gaze on Him, He raiseth us nearer to Himself; and we move upward, discerning His footsteps, hearing His Voice, learning His Will—ready, for Him, to endure hardness—yielding ourselves in Him more and more thoroughly to God—asking Him, whether we wake or sleep, whether we watch or work, to be our Lord. If, Brethren, it is your wish and purpose

¹ *Lyra Innocentium*. (‘Isaac on Moriah.’)

thus to live unto Him henceforth, be not, I pray you, disheartened over-much by the thought, humiliating though it be, of past unthankfulness to Jesus. Be not, I mean, so utterly cast down in the necessary sorrow for such sin, as to forget all present opportunities for that burning zeal we may yet render Him, for the rest of our time in the flesh, and *therefore* for eternity. For our gracious Lord's inquiry is not merely this: 'Why hast thou neglected Me so long?' but this, too, is added: 'Wilt thou follow Me *now*? Canst thou, wilt thou, now at last, give up the love of pleasure, in order to be a lover of Me?' O rise, and 'kiss the Son';¹ follow Him whithersoever He goeth: keep ever fixed in your remembrance the agony He underwent for you: it will fill you 'with love that never faints.'² Not in a mere passing enthusiasm, but in a steady, patient, humble diligence; not in the outward profession of gratitude to Him Whom you see not yet, but in acts of charity towards those about you—the temples of the Invisible—the great bright Light, shed upon you, will be poured out from you; and Jesus' work, so strange in the outset, so blessed in the issue, will be accomplished in His fainting struggling servant. O think thus of the end, and shew forth His praise, not only with your lips, but in your life; thank

¹ Psalm ii. 12.

² *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 166. Many, probably, have found great comfort in the private use of this hymn.

Him by serving Him; let your adoration of Him be not only in devotion of spirit, but in the conquests of the lusts of the body; let it be seen that He is precious to you, by your confessing Him boldly before men, bearing about with you, in daily duties, and amid hourly temptations, the Cross of Christ.

SERMON XVIII.

THE RISEN SAVIOUR CALLING US TO THE
LIFE RENEWED.

Easter Day.

ROMANS, vi. 4.

'Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.'

IF the exceeding great Love of Jesus in dying for us has a most constraining influence upon the soul, what must we feel as to His Resurrection-Life? If, by His Death, our Lord is ever calling us to amendment, is not His call to us doubly sweet, doubly encouraging, doubly awakening, now that He is indeed 'risen from the dead'? For now we know and are assured that He had died for *us*, as 'the Second Man,' not as a mere mortal child of 'the First Adam.' We go in thankful sadness to the place where they laid Him, and we find (O joy of joys!) that the great stone has been rolled away. 'He is risen, He is not there.' Angels in white

are sitting beside the tokens of His Burial; and as we gaze earnestly into the rock-hewn Sepulchre to see Him Whom our soul loveth, because He so greatly loved us, their question is repeated to us: 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?'¹ Yet even these heavenly witnesses invite us to draw nigh, and 'Come, see the place where the Lord lay.' It is indeed good for us to be there, so let us stay awhile in the rich man's 'garden'—the rest of the poor in spirit—the better Eden, not of Paradise lost, but of Paradise regained; filled, not with withered leaves and wasted fruit, but with buds of promise, and blossoms of hope unto life eternal. Very near though we are to the spot where 'they crucified Him,' the 'shining garments' take away the dread of the 'grave-clothes,' and we feel that to the faithful and the penitent death has for ever lost its sting, and that now, since Jesus lives, His quickening voice can already be heard, for their marvellous restoration, even by the 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Yes, my friends, we will wait for some lessons of God in this His 'best Garden.'

I. It is spring-time, and all the green things upon the earth are blessing the Lord. Fresh as from the Hands of their Creator, beautiful as when He made and called them 'very good,' gladdening by their glorious brightness the pale face of the sleeping world, they seem to sing their 'Alleluia,'

¹ S. Luke, xxiv. 5.

and invite us, notwithstanding our sorrows and our fears, to lift up our hearts, that now at last we may 'live unto the Lord.' 'The tender herb' appearing, 'the flowers of the field,' the blade of corn, the bloom upon the trees, the hedge-rows putting forth leaves, the cheering upgrowth of the buried seed—all these, and a thousand other signs, which 'ye see and know of your own selves,' speak to us of moving Heavenward and increasing daily for that great ingathering, which, though we think it many months away from us, is really 'nigh at hand.' All Nature reviving, bids us shake off the dull sleep of unprofitable living, and be restored to the power of a Christian. I look around me, and I look within me; and while all the works of the Lord are magnifying Him, by fulfilling the law which He gave them, 'I see another law in *my* members,'¹ which has been resisting (O how long!) the dew of His grace, and deadening the imparted life of His Spirit, and bearing 'briars and thorns.' But then *again* I consider the fair beauties of the spring-tide; they are not, indeed, my examples, but they are as *teachers* for me, sent from God; and I remember that, though now for them 'the winter is past,' it is but a few days since they were wrapt as in a death-slumber. And is there not even for one so lifeless and cold as I am, a message of mercy from the Lord, the *Giver* of life: 'Awake, thou that

¹ Romans, vii. 28.

sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light'?¹ Is there not deep meaning in the response of the Canticle: 'Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon *my* garden, that the spices thereof may flow out'?² For as 'the wind bloweth where it listeth,'³ so is the secret silent operation of the Spirit of God, enabling us, if we bewail our negligence towards Him, to have our 'fruit' still 'unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'⁴

II. But we are looking not merely at the brightening surface of the garden-ground, touched into hopeful growth again by the Breath of the Almighty—but also, and much much more intently, at the open Sepulchre of Him Who dieth no more, and Who, since He hath overcome the sharpness of death, 'hath brought life and immortality to light'⁵ for all believers. If the leafy bough and the teeming herbage are, in a manner, parables of Nature, to remind us that we may rise, how low so ever we may have fallen, however cold and barren may have been our hearts—the glorious Miracle of our Lord's Resurrection tells us from God that we *must* arise, and that as our bodies, after the pattern of His, *will* be lifted up from the dust of corruption, so our souls *should* be brought back, even now, from the graves of sin. 'Like as Christ was raised up

¹ Eph. v. 14.² Cant. iv. 16.³ S. John, iii. 8.⁴ Rom. vi. 22.⁵ 2 Tim. i. 10.

from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' The very assurance, that One in our flesh, the last Adam, the Representative Man, though truly dead and buried, did yet stand again before men and angels in the self-same Body which was crucified, gives us the certainty that though after our skin worms destroy this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God.¹ And therefore, since 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,'² and live in that awful Presence, it is forced in upon our conscience that we must follow after holiness *now*, and that in this present time, if ever, we must 'awake to righteousness.'³

III. But then, as has been rightly said, 'the comparison is not merely between our Lord's physical death and Resurrection, and our spiritual; but reaches far deeper.'⁴ For as we take another step under the Apostle's guidance, we learn that that dying and rising of His, *is*, in a mystery, yet very really, *our own*. As, 'in that He died, He died unto sin once,' and 'in that He liveth, He liveth unto God,' so we are to reckon ourselves 'to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God IN Jesus Christ our Lord.'⁵ These acts of the Head of the Body are ours, by virtue of our union with Him, and membership in Him. For we are

¹ Job. xix. 26.

² Heb. xii. 14.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 34.

⁴ Alford *in loco*.

⁵ Rom. vi. 10, 11. See the original.

'baptized into His *Death*'¹—'*buried with Him in Baptism*'—in Baptism '*also risen with Him*.'² Thus, Good Friday, Easter Eve, Easter Day—the anniversaries of His Passion, His Rest, His Glorified Life—are each and all of them days of great moment to *us*; representing to us, as they do, not only what He hath done *for us*, but what He hath wrought *in us* by His own ordinance of Baptism—our death unto sin, the burial of our old nature, our new birth unto righteousness; giving us thereby an actual fellowship with Himself, Who died, and was buried, and rose again, *for us*. It is only, of course, 'by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ' that 'Baptism saves us';³ but *because* He Who was dead is risen, *therefore*, when we are 'born of water and of the Spirit,'⁴ we become 'members of His Body,' taken, as Eve was out of the sleeping Adam, 'out of *His* Flesh and out of *His* Bones,'⁵ Who laid Him down and slept and rose up again, to find ere long the Church of His new Creation the Mother, for Him, of all who live indeed.⁶ What reality, my friends, this gives to that Baptism of ours! What an encouraging yet stirring call we hear therein, to live no longer for self, but for God!

¹ Rom. vi. 3.² Col. ii. 12.³ 1 S. Peter, iii. 21.⁴ S. John, iii. 5.⁵ Eph. v. 30. This is the exact translation of the Greek.⁶ Genesis, iii. 20.

IV. Truly it is a stirring call, not a lulling of our souls to sleep; for from this Baptismal union with the Lord starts the *duty of walking* 'in newness of life.' For to be sacramentally dead is not necessarily to be indeed and in truth dead unto sin; to be crucified sacramentally with Christ is not of itself to 'have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;' it does not follow, that, because sacramentally raised with Jesus, we are therefore rising in Him to thorough newness of life. Only, in this mystical union and fellowship which we have with Him, God grants us mighty helps to the conquest of sin, to the keeping of evil desire in its grave, to the fulfilment of those high aims and that heavenly work, which alone become the risen Christian man. From these *principles* of life we are to act. On these mysteries of grace we rest, for our beginning. On these foundation-truths, which go down to the Rock which is Christ, given us, as they are, by the great Master-builder, we ourselves are to be raised, as living stones, 'unto an holy Temple in the Lord.' Spiritually though really, really because spiritually, joined to Him, we are therefore bound to set aside the works and inclinations of 'the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,' and to think and speak and act as members of 'the new Man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.'¹ Belonging to Him, we hear His voice

¹ Ephesians, iv. 22-24.

not *without* us merely, but within. The call is to our own personal self :

‘Rise, *heart*: thy Lord is risen!’¹

V. One more thought, and then we leave the garden for the work allotted to us, knowing that we shall return thither at eventide, to ‘rest in hope.’ *Ere* you go forth, therefore, from this holy ground, remember how greatly its blessed associations should console and cheer you in the sorrows of your penitence, as you try, (and, of yourself, *in vain*,) to get peace under the bitter accusations of the past, in order to do better now while there is time. The Easter sun shines on the opened grave, and disperses our sins as the morning dew. ‘Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died; *yea rather, that is risen again*, Who is even at the Right Hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.’² If, in membership with Him ‘Who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification’—in the strength of His sacramental grace, and the power of His restored and now Eternal Life—we seek to be, in our humble measure, profitable to God, zealous for His work, intent on Him, and on the ‘things which are above,’ then, for Christ’s sake, the idleness of our ‘former conversation’ ‘shall not be mentioned unto’ us; and, through the passionate fervour of our awakened love and faith unfeigned, the cold

¹ George Herbert. ‘Easter.’

² Rom. viii. 34.

indifference and deadness of those miserable days shall pass away, 'as the ice in the clear warm weather.' For He, our Jesus, is 'the Resurrection' as well as 'the Life.'¹ If the child of prayer and purity, who never doubted His Revelation, never stained by gross ungodliness the purity of her baptismal robe, never amid many imperfections let go her hold on the Divine Saviour, has comfort to the full in His own precious promise, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall *never* die,'—*we*, too, the rest, who have so deeply revolted, neglected Him so long, wandered so far from Him, are not forgotten in the Heart of Him who said in the same breath of His Mouth, 'He that believeth in Me, though he were *dead*, yet shall he live.' Even if, in days long past, or in the hours of this present year, ye have slept in carelessness and sin, turn now to God, the quickening Spirit, and ye shall live. Even if ye have by cowardice denied Him, by idle self-chosen ways deserted Him, yet still—so that ye be *now* repentant, bound up in the Death of your own dear Lord, and united to His uprising by faith and hope and love—ye need not fear; O fear not ye to receive the Tokens of His Passion, the Memorial of His great loving-kindness, the Body and Blood which *assure* you that He which was dead is alive again. Fear rather to depart from Him. Fear, lest in leaving His awful yet most

¹ S. John, xi. 25.

blessed Presence, you lose His Life. Rise up to meet Him and to worship Him; kneel down to commune with Him, and to partake of Him, the living, life-giving 'Bread of God.'¹ So shall you go forth, as His indeed, to the new desires, the new work, the new trust, the ever-fresh self-sacrifice, of those, His beloved and secret ones, who are dying unto sin, and whose 'life is hid with Christ in God.'²

¹ S. John, vi. 33.

² Col. iii. 3.

SERMON XIX.

THE DEPARTING SHADOWS AND THE BRIGHT
EVENSONG.

Low Sunday.

JOB, xlii. 26.

'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'

THE risen life, which rests on the once-crucified ever-living Christ, is in itself a life of gladness and consolation. The very thought, that through our realized union with the glorified Humanity of our Lord, we are lifted to a higher state of things, and that in Him our aims are becoming more heavenly, our daily conversation purer, our appetites more under control, our faith more earnest and more fruitful, will cheer us greatly. To feel that, notwithstanding many infirmities of our flesh, we are yet 'servants to God,' trying to do His Will from the heart, seeking *His* Praise rather than the praise of men, striving at least to walk as His redeemed, in the unselfish spirit and habitual charity of 'the

New Man,' is a comfort to us in this time of our Christian probation. And so there is something *in us* which is ready to meet the joy prepared for us in the bright Festivals of the Church; and we can welcome the anniversaries of our Saviour's Resurrection and Ascension, as days intended for our own personal rejoicing in the uplifting fellowship with the Lord most High, our loving Jesus, risen and ascended for us.

But, for all this, it is the experience of most of those who are raised to the work and blessing of the life renewed, that there are times, not only of weariness in running the race, not only of lukewarmness as to the Kingdom of God, not only of carelessness about the interests of others, but also of disquietude concerning the soul, of the loss for a while of that clear vision of peace vouchsafed to the innocent and child-like, of inner gloom and awful assaults and terrible fears; times, when 'the consolations of God' seem 'small,' and faith too good to be true, and difficulties start up at every turn, and we cannot see our way. Who knows not in himself the case of the Psalmist, 'taken up,' yet again 'cast down'?¹ Who that has begun to fill up earnestly the *void* of life, and been strengthened with grace from above, cannot enter into that sad complaint of his? 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved: Thou, Lord, of Thy goodness hast

¹ Psalm cii. 10.

made my hill so strong. Thou didst turn Thy Face from me, and I was troubled.'¹ A fallen nature, though raised in Christ, is of itself most poor; and even when God visits us in the morning, of a sudden we are proved. In some shape or other, shadows haunt us still. Either there is subtle temptation to unbelief, or the mind grows morbid and preys upon itself, or there is restlessness in occupation, or the most frightful and blasphemous thoughts rise up unbidden, meeting us not merely in common sights and sounds, but mingling themselves horribly with holiest things, with our prayers and readings, with the most sacred Names of God, with the partaking of Christ's Body and Blood—very messengers of Satan, worse than any 'thorn in the flesh,' as buffeting and tormenting us in the spirit, and making life almost burdensome to us, in the agonies of such inward fears.

I. Now first, I suppose that these are suffered to fall on us, and to overcast awhile the brightness of God's Firmament, partly to shew us what hell is, and to make us flee from it. The terrors which we suffer in a troubled mind, the miserable desolation of our souls in this world of hope, may serve to teach us now, while we may yet profit eternally by the lesson, what it would be to 'be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord,'—to be always in the company of devils—to

¹ Psalm xxx. 6, 7.

dwell in 'the blackness of darkness for ever,'—to have light *never* come that comes to all—to abide with the haters of God, fixed in their hatred, cursing God, but unable to die, unchanged and unchangeable, like the tempter himself, (as the Scripture-revelations prove,) by years and years of enmity and pain. Of this most terrible condition, I say, we seem to have some dim reflection, even on earth, in the strange and sometimes dreadful clouds and nameless fears which distress and deject us. And, as the alarm of conscience is a forecasting of future judgment,¹ so the utter despair of the sentence itself may be, through the loving-kindness of God, brought before us now in these sinkings of heart and these afflictions of soul, wherein we not only discover the disease, but are drawn to the remedy. Is there not *mercy* here? My friend, if your soul should be saved in the Day of the Lord, would not these cares and anxieties, which drove you to God for peace, have been worth the whole world to you? Would you now lose *one pang* of these bitter trials, in order to go back to the former lusts of your ignorance, the indolent selfishness of which you have learnt to be ashamed? Surely, even *this* affliction under the Cross is better, infinitely better, than that state without God!

II. But next—these, which are such a 'fiery trial' to some of us, are in truth too often the

¹ See Bishop Butler's Second Sermon on Human Nature.

shadows of our former sins. It is not merely that a guilty conscience makes us think, like Joseph's brethren, that some special anguish is the fruit of some special misdeed; but rather, that God does really make us possess our former iniquities—His Will and rule for us being, not uncommonly, that 'wherewithal a man sinneth, with the same shall he be punished.' Have you been defiled by fleshly lusts? What marvel then, if now 'nothing is pure' to you, if the hateful suggestions of the devil take the form, in your mind, of unclean imaginations? Did you give way, in those old days, to vain swearing, or foolish talking, or the easy and terrific habit of making mirth with Holy Writ? Is it not almost a natural consequence, that the solemn words of the Book of God now run into jests in spite of prayer, and that blasphemies which you dare not utter crowd upon you even when you detest them most? 'He clothed himself with cursing, like as with a raiment; and it shall come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.'¹ Were your prayers long neglected, hurried over, filled with vanities? Behold the cause of present wanderings, coldness, lack of consolation, in your devotions! Did you forsake the study of the Scriptures when you had time to read and inwardly digest them? And is not this very want of knowledge the reason for the unbelief and half-belief which you lament

¹ Psalm cix. 18.

in yourself? It is our Lord's own question—very applicable to you and to me; very safe, though often repeated: 'Do ye not *therefore* err, because ye know not the Scriptures?'¹ So it is with other troubles; we must go far back in life to find the key of those mysteries of darkness which perplex and hinder us now. The springs of those poisoned waters are high up on the hills of our youth, and we must cast in *there* our cruse of salt, the healing tears of our penitence, and the potent gift of God's forgiveness. And though in some cases we can trace no connection between our present heaviness and our past neglect, let us recollect that some of God's greatest saints have been thus harassed, and have learnt, by closer self-search, to abhor themselves and to repent most sorrowfully, seeing that the bitter things written against them were indeed most true. And if this is the experience of His most holy servants—even of one who, like the afflicted patriarch, had long feared God and eschewed evil, so that to God Himself he appeared among men as 'perfect and upright,'²—what must *we* expect, who are only now at last rising to higher things? Think it not strange, my Brethren; but thank the Lord for giving you warning, and ask Him to look well if there be any wicked way in you, which it behoves you to know and to confess. So shall the darkness end, by His mercy, in light.

¹ S. Mark, xii. 24.

² Job, i. 8; ii. 3.

III. And indeed, my Friends, we must bear in mind that these *are departing* shadows, if only we are doing truth now, and drawing nigh to Him Who illuminates us with the brightness of His Presence. As we should not *see* them were it not for Him, the Light of the world, so their very existence, as they are thrown athwart our path, reminds us of that sunshine which will be with us when they are passed away. This is but a trial-time, as with other things, so with our endurance of these eclipses of faith. Let them but make us love and serve Him more, in Whom we have believed; and then our probation will be our actual furtherance; for heavenly comfort is promised to those who are *proved* by temptation, *exercised* by the chastenings of His heavy Hand.¹ Wrestle and strive and pray, and the light *will* drive out the darkness, devout thoughts *will* scatter far and wide the blasphemies of the spirit of evil; instead of the phantoms which disturb us, good angels shall succour our troubled souls; instead of the sudden wild alarms, which made our hearts so anxious, the Grace of the Communion of Jesus will confirm and strengthen us, and the Holy Ghost bear witness to Him within; instead of the remembrance of sin, there will arise aids to faith and purity, in friends and deeds and prayers and secret tracings of the Cross and words from the precious Book and ministerial counsel and heavenly desires

¹ S. James, i. 12; Heb. xii. 11.

and calls from Paradise, coming to us like the mighty men to David 'against the bands of the rovers,' day by day coming to us to help us, until it is 'a great host, like the Host of God.'¹ Little by little our fears depart; and if, now and then, the prospect of the dark valley overpowers us, and the old distress rises up like a flood, we need not be afraid that God has forsaken us. It may be, that in grace as in nature, the lengthening shadows assure us that it is toward evening. Who can tell whether this latest tribulation is not indeed the last—the closing scene for him who in gloom and dread has lain so long?

IV. And that closing scene, though it begins in sorrow, does not end therein. No, verily! for continuance in the good fight of faith, however overclouded for a time, 'shall bring a man *peace* at the last.'² He, who amid all faintings has still held on, and clung closer, because of his cross, to the Crucified, shall find the rod and the staff to comfort him in death, as they guided him, in his better mind, to holiness of living.³ To him there shall rise up light in the darkness, brightness unspeakable, while those around are weeping for the going down of the sun. Repentance will have done its work, and pardoning grace will so rest upon him, that 'he shall not much remember the days of his life,

¹ 1 Chron. xii. 21, 22.

² Psalm xxxvii. 37.

³ Psalm xxiii. 4.

because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.’¹ The final utterance of those dying lips is indeed a jubilant sacrifice of praise, and the quieted soul departs hence in peace, according to His Word, ‘to be with Christ, which is far better.’²

My Brethren! are there any of you who, though awake to the things of God, cannot as yet cast away the cords of the adversary, or be perfectly free from his snares and accusations? ‘Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him’ still ‘trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.’³ What saith the patient man in this very chapter? ‘Though He *slay* me, yet will I trust in Him.’⁴ Do not give up all as lost, because Satan’s evil suggestions seem to weave a net-work around you, or because you are not filled with the light that shines in the Face of Jesus Christ. Be not discouraged overmuch, because there yet remain in you so many traces of the old sins; because in the void place which you left, the devil’s dreadful seed has grown apace; because in the mists of unbelief which your careless worldly ways have raised from this pestilential earth of ours, you see as yet so many dream-faces and strange phantasms—inventions of that wicked one, who is full of malignity, and who would, if he could,

¹ Eccles. v. 20.² Phil. i. 23.³ Isaiah, l. 10.⁴ Job, xiii. 15.

suppress every holy desire in your soul, and divert you from every holy exercise. Be not so drawn away from Prayer, or Communion, or diligent study, or meditation on the Passion of your Lord. Rather, rise up like a man, and smite the tempter, and say to him, 'Thou shalt have no part in me, for Jesus is with me: I would rather die in extremity of torment, than consent to thy impious will.'¹ And then, having resisted the devil, you will find him 'flee from you;' while, as you 'draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to you.'² Fear not lest there should be no deliverance after all, no vision of peace to refresh your soul ere you go hence; 'though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry.'³ Listen yet a while in the spirit of trustfulness: 'Behold! the ears of my heart are before Thee, O Lord! open them, and say unto my soul, I am thy Salvation.' Be not afraid that He Who has called you to a better mind will fail to be the *Finisher* of your faith, or leave you without the gift of steady perseverance even to the end. 'A certain anxious person,' (says the Author of the *Imitation of Christ*,⁴) 'whose soul was continually fluctuating between hope and fear, came one day into a church, overwhelmed with anguish; and prostrating himself before the Altar, repeatedly

¹ Thomas à Kempis. *Imitation of Christ*. Book iii. chap. v. 4.

² S. James, iv. 7, 8.

³ Habakkuk, ii. 3.

⁴ Book i. chap. xxv. 2.

uttered this wish in his heart, "Oh that I knew I should be able to persevere!" Immediately he heard the Divine Voice speaking within him thus: "And what wouldest thou *do*, if this knowledge *were* bestowed upon thee? Do *now* that which thou wouldest *then* do; and rest secure of thy perseverance." Comforted and established by this answer, he resigned himself to the Divine disposal, and his perplexity and distress were soon removed. Instead of indulging curious inquiries into the probable future state of his soul, he applied himself wholly to know what was that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God, as the only principle and perfection of every good work.'

So let it be with you.

'Let present rapture, comfort, ease,
As Heaven shall bid them, come and go.'

Only be living now as children of the light, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reproving them. So, sooner or later, the end shall come—that Day of the Lord, which shall bring to His redeemed 'glory and honour and immortality,' or that hour of the last sweet sleep, when these troublous sounds shall vanish away, and voices celestial shall be heard instead, the prelude of that new song which they shall sing before the Throne. Then if not before,

¹ *Christian Year.* 'Morning.'

yet it may be for years ere the actual close, in the spiritual 'evening time it shall be light,'¹ yea! 'as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.'² And with that glory of the heavens there shall spring up from your heart, which shall be quiet then with the Peace of God, the bright thanksgiving of a pardoned soul—the evensong of praise to Him, Who upheld you through the burden and heat of the day, amid its storms, its sorrows, and its fears, and Who led you through the dark sad places of the wilderness, to the borders of the land of rest.

So, though at times there comes a season of depression, and now and again there rushes back upon the soul the remembrance of its former ways of carelessness and sloth, of neglected duty and high-handed sin, yet surely, as you feed 'among the lilies,'³ gaining, through the cleansing power of Him Who kept *them* thus spotless, the blessing of 'the pure in heart,'⁴ you too shall say with them, through the night-watches which yet remain, the uncertainties and distresses which are meant to strengthen the Christian in his faith and life, 'My Beloved is mine, and I am His,'—living or dying, in fear or in hope, I shall ever be safe in Him, 'until the day break, and the shadows flee away.'

¹ Zech. xiv. 7.

² 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

³ Canticles, ii. 16.

⁴ S. Matt. v. 8.

SERMON XX.

THE ETERNAL ISSUE OF THIS MOMENT OF TIME.

Second Sunday after Easter.

2 CORINTHIANS, VI. 2.

'Behold, now is the day of salvation.'

THE glory of the Lord' has been 'revealed' to us. For though, as we have seen, we must expect some shadows here, where we must 'walk by faith,' and though 'the perfect day' is still with patience to be waited for; yet the short space of our life, and the eternity of *His* existence Who 'is Love,' the sorrow of the sinner, and the pardon of the Saviour, are so blended together already, that, to the believer and the penitent, 'the darkness is past, and the true Light now shineth.'¹

It may be, Brethren, that you and I can trace as yet but few marks of loving faith and fruitful repentance in ourselves. We feel so backward in doing the Will of God—so slow, though spared, to recover our lost years—so unsteady in our onward march to join those good soldiers of Jesus Christ,

¹ 1 S. John, ii. 8.

who are fighting manfully in the fore-front of the hottest battle. It is indeed most humiliating. But are we in earnest? are we advancing 'in the power of His might?' are we, in Him, gaining some conquests—though 'faint, yet pursuing,' though weak, *growing* in grace? For then, albeit we have no ground for self-satisfaction, we *can* 'have confidence towards God.' Even if 'thou hast' but 'a little strength,' Christ sets 'before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.'¹ There is a Voice which calleth thee to enter in and dwell there—in the one 'continuing City,' the Kingdom which cannot be removed, the Presence which is Life for ever, and 'fullness of joy.' And it is no strange voice which we hear, but the old familiar utterance of God the Holy Ghost: 'Behold! now is the day of salvation.' Take, I pray you, the sentence, word by word; for none of them is without signification; each is a note in the Divine harmony intended for 'him that hath ears to hear.'

I. First, it is *day-time*. The night, though it cometh, is not fallen upon us yet, so we can still labour; the command, however early it was spoken, can still be fulfilled: 'Son, go work *to-day* in My vineyard.' We look out at times upon the untilled earth, and are almost in despair about those briars and thorns which have sprung up so plentifully, and the miserable empty state of this heart of ours,

¹ Revelation, iii. 8.

whence our Lord has so long sought fruit. And then again we look at the heavens, with their signs above in the Eternal Book, their wonders below in the provident gifts and prolonged mercies granted to the world, their tokens of grace and of goodness in the experience of our own past lives: we look, I say, at the heavens, for we are wayfaring men, and it is not for us to *know* the times or the seasons. But even as we guess at them, we are sure, at all events, that swiftly the hours have sped, that 'the shadow' is 'gone down' many degrees already on the sun-dial, that for many of us, 'it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And still, for all that, there are some good working-hours left, priceless minutes ere night-fall; it is yet 'called to-day.' Though the third hour struck unnoticed by us, and the sixth hour, and we heeded it not, and the ninth, and found us, as before, 'standing idle,' the good Householder is in need of labourers yet a little while—in *great* need of hard-working men, sobered at last, serious, longing for service, and ready to love the Master much. Are *you* one of these? Look up and lift up your head, and devote yourself, heart and soul, mind and body, to Him Who seeks you still in the market-place of this sinful world. You have worked long—say rather, you have idled long—for others, 'a busy-body in other men's matters,' careless about your own true interests, your welfare before God; be diligent ~~now~~

in this field which is nearer home, for *this*, though He lets you count it as yours, is 'the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts.' 'The true Vine' groweth there, and His 'branches are the branches of honour and grace;' will not He shelter thee, refresh thee, cheer thy soiled face? Yes! verily, for His leaves are for thy healing—His fruit for thy restoration—His Life for thine abundant increase 'in righteousness and true holiness.'

II. For, next, it is the 'day of *salvation*;' and so, if we go at once into that garden of God, and diligently occupy ourselves, we are assured that all is *not* lost. 'He that plougheth' can still 'plough in hope.' She that rooteth up the weeds of the past neglect of her vain life, may still be partaker of the reward. They that sow in tears, may yet reap in joy. You who are pruned so sharply now, may see, in this present bitterness, an earnest of 'more fruit in' your 'age'—more blessing from Him Who sanctifies affliction, even here, to the saving of the soul. We enter into life even now, as we set ourselves to accomplish, in faith and sincerity, His appointed task. 'He that heareth,' in order to obey, Christ's 'word, and believeth' (with a 'faith that worketh by love') 'on Him that sent' Him, 'hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.'¹ Enfranchised as we are by our Baptism into Christ,

¹ S. John, v. 24.

and taking up our liberty as we can—by active, obedient, loving belief in Him—we go forth as a part of His second creation, and lo! ‘all things become new’ to us. Where before we were as the dead, we move as ‘alive unto God.’ Where before, in our worldly way, we measured the worth of an hour by the amount of pastime or of profit we could gain therein, we learn the due proportions of such things by weighing against them the glory of the Everlasting. Where before we were ‘sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber,’ we discern the blessedness of a wakeful watchful life. In the same place, and perhaps, if it must be, among the same companions as of old, we hear far different calls, and see everything, especially the sinful, in a fresh light; ourselves, the greatest sinners, plucked out of the burning, to bring others to Him Who has so marvellously saved *us*. Amid like scenes of temptation, we are no longer, as then we seemed, alone, fighting in our own strength, and therefore quickly fallen, but *with Him*, and upholden by His Help; ‘for He saith, . . . In a day of salvation have I *succoured* thee.’¹ *This* is the grace of God wherein, at this present, we stand, and through which, if we will, whatever may have been our short-comings, we may henceforth serve Him in the godly, righteous, and sober life of humble, diligent, Christian labourers, waiting for their call and for their rest.

¹ 2 Corinthians, vi. 2.

III. But 'receive not' this 'grace of God *in vain*;' for remember that, though it is yet day, and though it is a day of *salvation* in which we live, yet the accepted time will not be always with us. The day of salvation is *now*. Now, while we speak; now, while the Gospel-sound goeth forth; now, while you *hear* this voice of most gracious love; now, while conscience still echoes to the call; now, while the work lies ready to your hand—while the sacrifice is shewn you, while that which is wanting is revealed to you, while your powers of body and of mind are unimpaired, or while, as you own your infirmities, Christ's strength can be made perfect in your weakness—'*now is the day of salvation.*' Two thoughts spring out of this.

(1.) The first clothes itself in the very language of Holy Writ—'The time is short.' As this hurrying 'world passeth away,' as we bring our years to an end like a tale that is told, so the golden opportunity for overcoming the world, and rising out of it, the moments in which it is borne in upon us, that we must dedicate our life to God, because of 'the *appalling* tale' of our *lost* years, must be very brief indeed. The time of the *loud* calls and *special* invitations—the time for closing with His offer of salvation, for marking well how great that salvation is, for working out, by His aid, our own salvation—is a short time—shorter than we think or expect—
- *perhaps* for those who seem the children of

the morning, than for those whose sun appears to be setting—shorter for one whom we consider in the midst of life, than for another who is, we imagine, at its close—fearfully short for us all. It is only *now* that God waiteth to be gracious—to-morrow it may be too late; only *now* can we be sure of acceptance—in a moment the door may be shut; only *now* is it certain that the Redeemer is nigh at hand. Turn away, and He may have withdrawn Himself and be gone. Now only can you tell that He stands at the door and knocks, for you hear Him distinctly, and the sound vibrates even to the secret chamber of your heart. How terrible, after a few hours more of fleshly lusts or of spiritual sloth, to have that awful experience: ‘I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer!’ Beware of delays; they are always dangerous, and often deadly. Repentance, hope, life, consolation, are not there, but here—not there, in the deceitful dreams of your vain imagination, but here, in the plain promises of God, and in steady obedience to His Word. Salvation is not then, but *now*—not then, when you fancy there will come an effectual call, grace which cannot be resisted, a sudden, almost bodily, sight of the Saviour—not then, but now, while He is calling you in divers tones and ways—now, while means of grace are open to you and prepared on purpose for you—now, while His invisible Presence is in the

very midst of us. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh—neglect not so great salvation.

(2.) And is not the other thought one of encouragement and of comfort? *Though* the time is short, yet it is in the Hand of Him Who is the Lord of time, and who can crowd a world of good into a moment's vision. Oh, my friends, if you or I should ask, as ask we *must*, 'How can I regain those hours so invaluable, which I have wasted on the trifles of the world? how find acceptance with God in this eleventh hour? how please Him by the mere residue of a day, too short *in its fullest length* for such a work?' may not this be the answer? Turn from the thought of time to the thought of eternity, and to that *now* which is to *you* the day of salvation; for God is in that moment which we call 'now.' In God there is neither Past nor Future. In Him, *our* past can be redeemed; in Him, *our* future can be glorious still, if in the actual present we set to work heartily and with our might. 'Go *ye* also into the vineyard.'

Oh, what a joy for the servant of the Lord, to be able to assure but *one*—one troubled anxious soul—that in this short time yet remaining of a wasted life, she may yet finish a good work for the Redeemer! How great a blessing, if he could but help *one* forlorn and shipwrecked brother to take heart again, and to 'go forward' in the certain *hope*, that if he be, in earnest, a penitent faithful

servant, it shall be written, not on his grave (for 'God forbid that' we 'should glory' *there* 'save in the Cross of our Lord!') but in the Book of Remembrance before Him Who knows his first rebellion and his last repentance, 'He *did* the Will of his Father!'¹ God grant it may be so with us, when this day of our salvation merges into the day of our Lord Jesus Christ!

IV. But there is one word more—not to be lost sight of, as the very expression teaches us. '*Behold*, now is the day of salvation.' Yea! my friends, *behold* this promise, this warning, this mercy of our God. Keep the promise before your eyes—let not the warning be forgotten—disregard not such a mercy. Surely a deliverance so loving, an access so free, an offer so gracious, cannot be to us as a common thing! They bring God our Saviour near to us. Faith *beholds* Him, and goes forth to meet Him. Hope *beholds* Him, and will trust in Him, though for a while His Hand seems the Hand of a Slayer. Love *beholds* Him; and as she adores Him Who hath wrought so great salvation for her, His Commandments are no longer grievous—His 'yoke is easy, and' His 'burden is light.'

Open then the eyes of your faith and hope and love, and weigh well these words of God—His message to your soul—the token of His Presence, which is nigh to you even now. Think what He

¹ S. Matthew, **xxi.** 31.

would have you to do. Have I neglected Him long, served Him carelessly, spent my substance on that which could not satisfy, interested myself in any work or pleasure rather than in Him? Still He calls, invites, presses me to come; smites me, that I may rise up and go to Him at last, and love Him best. 'Better give my heart to God late than *never*! better by force, or the loss of earthly comforts, than not at all!' ¹ 'The day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.'² Now, *if ever*, we must come to Him—*now*, while we have the light, lest darkness come upon us. Think how we are attracted thither! Gather up, if you will, once again, the meditations which we have had together. Remember how many many things help and encourage us to return, how many blessings and fears constrain us to go by the homeward path. Self-knowledge—the knowledge of *Him*—the knowledge we gain of sin and of the world—all hasten our steps towards the City of Plenteous Redemption. The value of a moment—the eternal issue—the goodness of God—the review of life—the confession of evil habits—the opening in the days that are left—the service we may render with our body—the study wherewith we may exercise our mind—the devotion whereby the soul may dedicate itself—the diligence required of us—the charity by which we may be ever doing good—the

¹ *Adam's 'Private Thoughts.'*

² *Jeremiah, vi. 4.*

Sacramental Grace that can always sustain us—the Cross of Christ, and His Resurrection-life—the Indwelling of the Spirit—the Fellowship of the Church—the happiness of suffering—all these combine to draw us to repentance and amendment of life. The sorrows of our lot, its losses, its bitter disappointments, its days of weakness or of pain, all bid us come first to ourselves and then to God. Yet chief of all is perhaps our fear—the travail-pangs whereby, little by little, Christ is formed in us—till at last we delight ourselves in Him, redeeming the time for Him, because He has so lovingly redeemed *us*.

For there are agonies in the spiritual life—seasons of real dread about the soul, and of wrestling with oneself in the awful thought of being remembered of God no more. The sense of personal unworthiness, of personal negligence, of personal sin, of God's bright Face lost to us because of these, is then borne in upon the heart. Then, even then—then perhaps as never before—we *speak* to God in our terrible distress, afraid that we are indeed shut out, yet crying to Him out of the darkness: 'O visit *me* with Thy salvation; that I may see the felicity of Thy chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of Thy people, and give thanks with Thine inheritance!'¹ 'Narrow is this house of my soul to which I invite Thee to come—O let it be enlarged by Thee; it is ruinous—re-build it, I beseech Thee; there are

¹ Psalm cvi. 4, 5.

things within it to offend Thine Eye—I know and confess them—but who shall cleanse it? To whom else but Thee shall I cry?¹ Canst Thou, wilt Thou, remember and restore such an one as I am? ‘My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee;’² what hope can there be for *me*?

Is there not an answer from Him Who is of infinite mercy, and Who hateth nothing that He has made? Yes, verily; hearken diligently with much heed. ‘Behold! I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.’³ Can He not so work for you—a path to Himself for the long lost soul—streams of grace for thy barren heart, so desolate and dry? Can we not arise in the strength and light He offers us, and make up for lost time? Yes! and indeed we will do so, by God’s help. Time wasted—precious opportunities for ever thrown away—unspeakable privileges despised—Thy work, O God, set aside for a more convenient season!—we acknowledge and bewail it all. Yet, O Thou Who makest all things new, in this brief moment of time which we can yet call our own, we would serve Thee. Not long, it may be, yet passionately and with our might; not in the proud hope of *meriting* a reward, yet so that we may not lose our crown; not, alas! as the

¹ S. Augustine, Confessions, i. 6.

² Psalm lxiii. 1.

³ Isaiah, xliii. 19.

pure, but at least as the purified; not as if we could ourselves atone for the idleness of the days which Thou rememberest, but as knowing that our Redeemer 'is precious,' and that, even in making up for *past* time, our labours shall not be in vain *in Him*; not as trusting to our work, but as seeking, in our work for Him, that peace which we could not find in the world—Thee, O God, Thee only would we serve!

And this Peace which the world cannot give—this Glory which is utterly unknown to its perishing fame—this Life of the celestial Kingdom which can never be shaken or destroyed—Thou hast promised to us in the faith and service of Thy Son. By Him, eternally the Same, our deathless Life, Thou speakest Peace unto Thy servants; and we hear what comfortable words that Saviour saith unto all that truly *turn* to Him: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*.'¹ Deep answereth unto deep; the depth of Thy mercy soundeth forth to the depth of our strong yearnings for the Glory of That Presence, wherein alone the earnest expectation of the fallen creature can be for ever stilled and satisfied. For 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee.'²

¹ S. Matt. xi. 28.

² S. Augustine, Confessions, i. 1.

